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# Managing strategic change and strategy as practice
# an investigation into sensemaking and identity

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**Managing Strategic Change and Strategy as Practice: an investigation into sensemaking and identity**

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**Abstract**

This is an interpretive, single-site process study of strategic change based on qualitative data from a real-time, two-year observation of an internal merger between an Architecture faculty and an Art & Design faculty. It takes a 'Strategy as Practice' (SAP) perspective which considers strategy to be something that people do, a form of 'strategising'. Consistent with a SAP approach, the analysis explores change through a sensemaking and identity lens. The data were analysed through three different research questions with each presented as a separate thesis chapter. The three areas are: how sensemaking and sensegiving in meetings can help sustain strategic change over time, how deliberate organisational identity change can be facilitated and how identity work occurs during organisational change. The meetings chapter develops a process model of how senior executives sustain strategic change through their sensemaking and sensegiving in meetings. It extends understanding of sensegiving competence through identification of the need to employ both processual and influencing skills. The organisational identity chapter shows that intentional organisational change is a phased process in which new claims are set out and communicated discursively and then meanings develop experimentally, through work practices and physical changes which are deliberately facilitated by the change leader to encourage recipient meaning-making in line with the claims. The identity work chapter extends existing knowledge of how identity work occurs over time, particularly the impact of non-discursive practices on individual identity work. It shows how top-down organisational change, which invokes anxiety and challenges individual identity, can lead to positive outcomes for the change process and be identity enhancing for individuals. As a whole, this thesis contributes to knowledge of Strategy as Practice, particularly through its focus on top manager sensegiving and recipient response, strategic episodes over time and non-discursive aspects of sensemaking and identity.

# Chapter 1: Overview of Thesis

## 1.1 Introduction

This research adopts a 'Strategy as Practice' (SAP) approach to explore strategic change. SAP research focuses on what strategists actually do: their words, actions and lived experiences, arguing that these are the raw materials through which tasks are socially accomplished and strategic outcomes delivered (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2003). Strategic change is typically defined as a redefinition of mission and purpose which reflects a new direction for an organisation (Gioia et al. 1994). This study, based on a merger between an Art & Design Faculty and Architecture Faculty in a UK university, focuses on three aspects of change: how senior executives sustain deliberate change over time through sensemaking and sensegiving in meetings, how intentional organisational identity change is facilitated, and the impact of identity regulation on individual identity work during a change process. In this chapter an overview of the thesis is provided.

As a student-researcher I was interested in strategic change and was also keen to learn more generally about the SAP approach to research. SAP scholars have undertaken focussed studies of strategic change from a range of theoretical perspectives, such as institutional theory, social practice theory, sensemaking and identity theory (Golsorkhi et al. 2015). My research initially began as a study of how strategy practitioners intervene in the generation, formulation, development and progression of strategic initiatives. I planned to track a number of strategic change initiatives over time. The site selected was a university where two faculties were merging. However, it quickly became apparent that the merger was one large initiative, even though it had different sub-streams. The literature on strategic initiatives seemed less of an obvious fit than literature on strategic change processes. Returning to the literature, I identified studies that seemed to be a close fit with my empirical context, such as strategic change, middle and senior managers, universities and mergers. A number of promising areas emerged to focus on but, as is often the case with a longitudinal, real-time change process (Langley 1999; Pettigrew 1990), it was not obvious how the process would unfold or which focus area might be most insightful. I decided to collect data which was consistent with a

SAP approach and which would enable me to explore the case from a number of different theoretical perspectives. This enabled emerging themes to continue to develop during data collection and the main areas of focus were not finalised until data collection was complete. During the analysis phase, I refined my focus and explored the case from three different theoretical perspectives which each seemed to offer strong explanatory potential. Thus, the findings focus on three areas: how senior managers sustain strategic change through sensemaking and sensegiving in change management meetings (Chapter 5), the process of deliberate organisational identity change (Chapter 6), and the process of individual identity work during organisational change (Chapter 7). The three areas are connected but not interdependent, so each is presented as an independent chapter with its own introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and contribution, much like an academic journal article. This approach proved a useful learning experience as the iterative nature of the process helped to build and consolidate my own learning.

The contributions of the thesis are centred on the three findings chapters. In addition, Chapter 8 (Conclusions) provides a review of these findings but also considers the overarching contribution of the thesis to the SAP field. The findings in Chapter 5 enable me to account for how senior manager meeting based sensemaking and sensegiving can help to sustain a process of strategic change and lead to a realised strategy that is close to the intended strategy, and contribute to the literature on sensemaking and change, and the literature on strategy as practice and meetings. In Chapter 6 a process model is used to explain how senior executives can intentionally drive a process of organisational identity change. The process considers both change leader actions and recipient response. This work extends existing knowledge of the nature of organisational identity change, particularly how labels-based and meanings-based change occurs and the role of discursive, material and work practice interventions in organisational identity change. My findings in Chapter 7 enable me to contribute to the literature on individual identity change, first, through a summary process model that explains how individual identity change occurred over time; also through contributions to extant knowledge of non discursive forms of identity regulation and work; and on the impact of identity struggles on individual self-identity and on the change process.

### 1.2 Literature Review

Each of the main chapters (5, 6 and 7) includes a specific review of the literature relating to that particular study. The Literature Review (chapter 2 of this thesis) which is briefly summarised here focuses on two main areas: First, the development of the SAP field and my rationale for adopting a SAP approach, and second, my own research journey which led to the choice of research site, research methodology including data collection choices, and overall focus of the research. This section is designed to reflect the inductive nature of this interpretive study where data collection began with an initial area in mind but ideas developed as the case unfolded. It provides a level of context that is often absent from published academic journal articles due to structural limitations (Pratt 2008). Over time, as data were collected and themes emerged, the three main areas of focus developed, and the theoretical background for each of these areas is explored in the three main chapters.

Research on strategic change is typically associated with a strategy process perspective, which focuses on how strategies are formulated, rather than strategy content, such as retrenchment or growth (Huff and Reger 1987; Johnson et al. 2007). Research from a process school perspective has tended to take a complex, contextual and pluralistic view of strategy development, acknowledging the role of non senior managers in the process, and seeing strategy formulation and implementation as an intertwined rather than linear process (Bower 1970; Burgelman 1983; Langley et al. 1995; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Pettigrew 1992; Sminia 2009). However, whilst process research has tended to look at the organisational level, for example, how processes change over time and the impact on organisational outcomes (Pettigrew 1992; Pettigrew and Whipp 1991), SAP research has focussed more on strategists and the work that they do (Johnson et al. 2007). In doing so it is argued that SAP studies can complement existing research by providing the detailed activities behind change processes, or the skilful practices that underpin dynamic capabilities and the resource-based perspective (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2003). SAP research can also help to understand the nature of skilful strategy practices, which are often invisible in traditional strategy research, but can have considerable consequences for organisations (Johnson et al. 2003; Whittington 2006). In doing so SAP research can also help practitioners directly

through insights that relate to the things that they do every day (Johnson et al. 2003). Balogun et al. (2007:209) define SAP as the study of,

> *"a situated social activity, constructed through the actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon".*

From my own perspective, SAP research is very much in keeping with my own interests as an experienced strategy practitioner and as an educator of strategy practitioners and other managers. My initial reading also fostered a genuine desire to become part of this congenial community, to attend associated conference tracks and to produce research that clearly took a SAP approach and was labelled as such.

Initial reading, including a number of different reviews of gaps in the SAP literature (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Johnson et al. 2007; Vaara and Whittington 2012) were used to identify promising possibilities for my own research in the SAP arena. For example, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) identify gaps in the role and contribution of external actors to organisational strategy as well as material practices such as the use of PowerPoint in strategy workshops. However, the disparity between the different existing reviews, the relative newness of SAP as a research perspective, and the breadth of the field make it difficult to identify a clear research gap from the literature as there is limited agreement and few areas that are densely researched. Most SAP research builds around an existing body of work through a cumulative process of 'progressive coherence' (Dittrich et al. 2015). Others suggest that research should stem, not just from the literature, but also from problems the researcher or the organisation under study finds interesting (Balogun et al. 2003; Kilduff 2006). In my case, this initial interest was around strategic initiatives and how they are developed and implemented successfully. My research choice was also bounded by the availability of a research site that would allow the sort of close observation over time (Pettigrew 1990) that is associated with high quality SAP research. One possible site I identified was a merger between an Art and Design and Architecture faculty in a UK university. I explored the literature relating to similar contexts and found a wealth of support for studying a university environment. For example, prominent process scholar, Dennis Gioia, and SAP scholar, Paula Jarzabkowski, have both produced a series of papers from university studies (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994; Jarzabkowski 2003; Jarzabkowski 2005; Jarzabkowski 2008;

Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Jarzabkowski and Sillince 2007; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002). There was also evidence that a merger or significant internal reorganisation was an ideal setting to study strategic change (for example Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Bartels et al. 2006; Clark et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Mantere et al. 2012).

Once the site was chosen it was clear from both the empirical context and my reading that the strategic change literature was more relevant than studies of strategic initiatives or issues (such as, Ansoff 1980; Bower 2005; Dutton et al. 2001; Mantere 2005). Narrowing my search, I identified that strategic change often involves a cognitive shift as people 'make sense' of the change (Bartunek 1984; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Porac et al. 1989). Both process and SAP researchers have adopted 'sensemaking' as a theoretical perspective for analysing strategic change (for example, Balogun et al. 2015; Bartunek et al. 1999; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994). Literature on sensemaking also led to studies, such as Gioia's work, concerning the role of organisational identity in sensemaking and strategic change (Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia and Thomas 1996). I also identified possible gaps between my research context and the literature. For example, existing strategic change studies related to sensemaking and organisational identity have tended to focus on change leaders rather than recipients and on change initiation rather than implementation (Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 2010). However, whilst my site was clearly a compelling empirical context for a SAP strategic change study, it was not clear how the change would unfold at this stage and therefore which theoretical perspective or specific research question was most appropriate. Thus, I began with a broad research question based on definitions of the SAP field (such as, Balogun et al. 2007; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007) which could inform my data collection approach,

> "*a study of strategic change development and progression as a situated activity, that seeks to plausibly explain how strategy work is socially accomplished through the actions and interactions of senior and middle managers and the situated practices they draw upon".*

Over time, based on further reading and emerging themes from the data, I

established three theoretical areas of interest around sensemaking and sensegiving during strategic change, organisational identity change and, later, individual identity work (Alvesson et al. 2008). I developed a more detailed framing for the contribution of each area, which is included in chapter 5, 6, and 7 of this thesis. I also developed and refined three main research questions:

- How do senior executives sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving in change management meetings? (Chapter 5)
- How can senior executives intentionally drive a process of organisational identity change? How can a change leader facilitate the process through discursive, material and work practice interventions? (Chapter 6)
- How do individuals make the transition to a new organisation identity as part of strategic change? In particular, why do practices, which existing literature suggests are important, seem particularly so in this case and why does identity struggle seem to lead an enhanced self-identity for academics and managers and to help to deliver an intended change? (Chapter 7)

A possible limitation of this research is that I originally planned to study multiple strategic initiatives because, as a strategy practitioner, I thought this was interesting and relevant: a challenge that practitioners face regularly. When it became clear that my case site was one significant change rather than numerous smaller ones I focussed on strategic change as this was close enough to my original intent to still be both interesting and relevant. With hindsight, if not for my own personal interest as a practitioner, I might have focussed my literature search more specifically around mergers and internal mergers, rather than focus on strategic change, where the fact it is a merger is very much a secondary consideration. This is something I may explore further in future. Also, shaped by the SAP approach, I focussed on how strategising is skilfully and socially accomplished, neglecting perhaps a more critical view of issues of power and control, as these were not prominent in the literature which seemed most relevant to my research context. Carter et al. (2008:87) argue that the SAP approach should take a more critical perspective and suggest that it "remains within the tradition of mainstream, functional research" and "intentionally or not…positions itself as a problem-solving tool for managerial elites". The inclusion of two chapters in the second edition of the Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice (Golsorkhi et al. 2015): one on power and another on critical perspectives,

suggests efforts have been made to redress this concern. Undoubtedly the implementation of a deliberate change process does involve the exercise of power. However, it is not the primary focus of this research. However, my research also does not focus on 'managerial elites' and includes the voices of a wide range of strategy participants, at senior and middle manager and senior lecturer level.

### 1.3 Research Approach

This research seeks to build on existing theory of strategic change, particularly sensemaking, organisation identity change and identity work, and to do so through a Strategy as Practice approach. This has implications for the research design. Interpretive, in-depth qualitative, longitudinal studies are well suited to researching complex social interaction (Johnson et al. 2007; Langley 2007). Single site cases studies of this nature have been successfully established as a means of generating new insight for both process and SAP research (Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Kwon et al. 2014a; Rouleau 2005).

Access was granted to Unik (a pseudonym), a UK university, by the university's Vice Chancellor. Unik is a former polytechnic which gained university status in 1992. The case study is based on an internal merger taking place between the Art & Design faculty and the Architecture faculty, led by the existing Dean of Architecture. Architecture operated from a stand-alone building and was very well regarded, more so than the wider University, or Art & Design. The merger was initially viewed by the Dean as a threat to Architecture's reputation that would dilute its identity through merger with this larger and more dysfunctional partner. Initially I intended to identify a number of strategic initiatives and to track their progress for an academic year (October 2011 to July 2012). However, it became apparent during data collection that the change was one large project and that the design of the merger included a 'harmonisation year' where the two faculties worked alongside each other until August 2012. Thus, the main implementation phase did not begin until after I intended to complete my data collection. Taking Pettigrew's (1990) advice that site choice is a mix of research intent, practical constraints and 'planned opportunism' I decided to focus on the merger as a strategic change and to follow it in real-time for two calendar years (October 2011 to September 2013).

My plan was to collect data that would enable analysis from a range of theoretical perspectives, particularly those that appeared from SAP and strategy process literature to be most compelling and insightful for studies of strategic change, such as sensemaking. Taking a SAP perspective I was also mindful of the need to capture understanding of the change from a range of different people and perspectives (Balogun et al. 2003; Johnson et al. 2007; Pettigrew 1990). Consistent with Langley and Abdallah (2012) data collected included observations, particularly meetings, interviews and document collection. Interviews were conducted with the change leader (the Faculty Dean), his immediate middle management team (FMG), people reporting to members of FMG, and at Executive Board level. In total, 132 meetings and events were observed, including 51 FMG meetings. 98 interviews were conducted and approximately 1285 documents were collected. The breadth and depth of data collection was appropriate for the exploratory nature of the research (Pettigrew 1990).

## 1.4 Findings

The findings reflect the three main chapters of the thesis. In this section each chapter is introduced and the findings are briefly summarised.

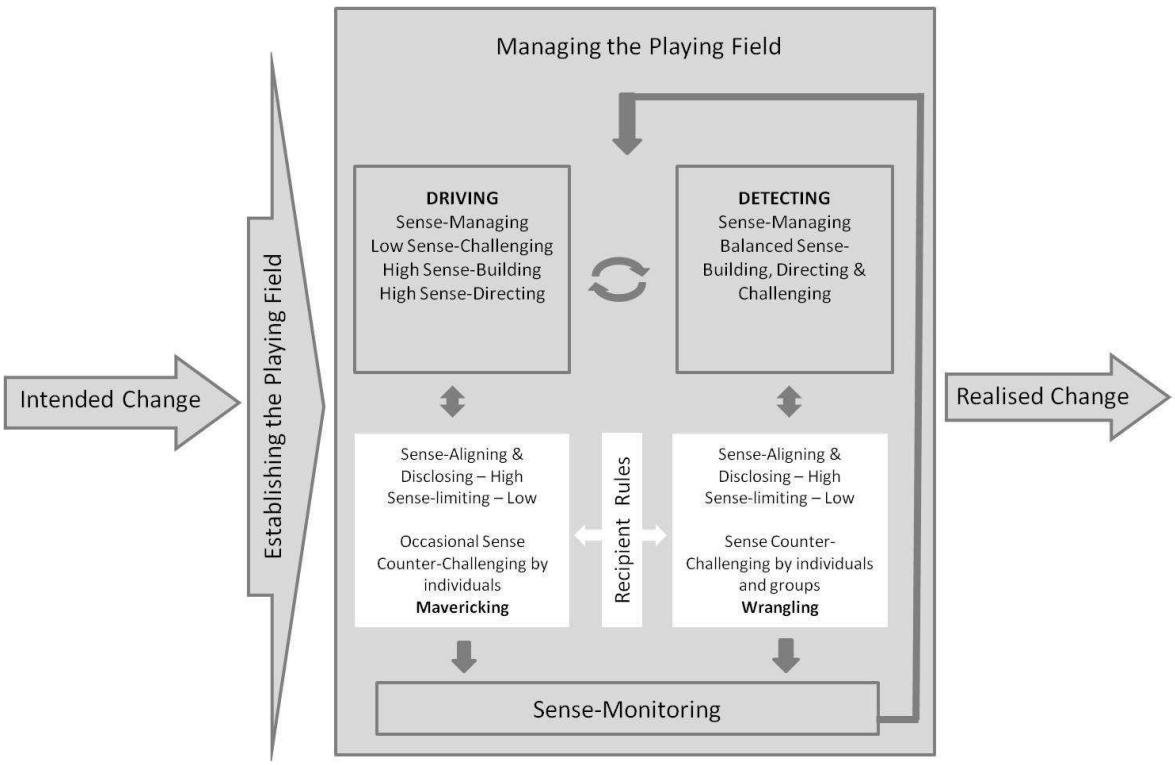
### *1.4.1 Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Meetings*

Strategy scholars, from a process and SAP tradition, see strategic change as a second order change involving a cognitive reorientation for the organisation (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Bartunek 1984). Thus, many have taken a sensemaking perspective (Balogun et al. 2015; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994; Sonenshein 2010). Many studies exploring strategic change have focussed on the skill of sensegiving, in acknowledgment that the responsibility for change often rests with top managers (see, for example, Cornelissen et al. 2011; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). Studies show that change recipients are active participants in the sensemaking process, who interpret and draw inferences from the words and actions of managers (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Mantere et al. 2012; Sonenshein 2010). Yet few studies bring these different strands together to understand how senior managers, through

their sensegiving and sensemaking, sustain strategic change over time, steering recipient sensemaking towards their desired future vision.

I address this challenge through a longitudinal real-time case study of a planned, top-down strategic change initiative in a university, by focussing on how senior managers sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving. The strategic change involved the internal merger of two faculties. My analysis explores how the senior manager used meetings in particular to influence his managers and their actions and, in doing so, facilitated the development of the merged entity in a way that was consistent with his vision. The process of data analysis resulted in a three tier set of first order codes based on participant concepts, second order conceptual themes, and aggregate dimensions which were presented as a data structure, in the manner of the 'Gioia method' (Gioia et al. 2013; Langley and Abdallah 2012). From this, a process model (see Figure 1-1) was constructed which explains how senior managers sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving in change management meetings. I show how fortnightly faculty management group (FMG) meetings helped the change leader to implement a realised strategy that was close to his intended strategy.

**Figure 1-1 Process Model**



A narrative account is provided to support the first order concepts. At the theoretical second order level of analysis I worked with the metaphor of the Dean as a coach, managing his players on the field, and identified two main phases: establishing the playing field and managing the playing field. Managing the playing field included how the Dean managed the process and content of the FMG meetings over time. I identified that the Dean structured the meetings in two main formats which I labelled 'driving' and 'detecting'. The process was managed over time by fluctuating between the two types of meetings, where Driving meetings helped to establish new change and were future focussed and Detecting meetings were more 'meat and potatoes' and involved monitoring progress and identifying obstacles.

The coding structure identified four different types of sensegiving by the Dean – sense-building, sense-challenging, sense-directing and sense-managing related to different types of sensegiving need. The first three related to discursive practices whilst sense-managing included both discursive chairing of the meeting and practices such as setting the agenda. Analysis revealed that sense-managing, in terms of managing the format of the meeting was quite different for detecting meetings compared with driving meetings and this resulted in a different intensity of the different sensegiving types which sustained the change process in different ways. Looking at how the Dean decided on the meeting type, I identified two key areas. 'Establishing the playing field' refers to activities which occurred prior to the start of merger related activity and involved 'creating the rules' which involved setting up the initial structure and focus of the meetings and 'shaping the team' which included determining who should attend the meetings. Secondly, 'sense-monitoring' refers to processes before and after each meeting that influenced the Dean in determining whether the next meeting would take a 'driving' or 'detecting' form. The findings also identified four different types of recipient sensegiving – sense-aligning, sense-counter-challenging, sense-disclosing and sense-limiting in response to the Dean. In detecting meetings counter-challenging usually involved both individuals and groups, which I labelled 'wrangling', whilst in driving meetings it was more infrequent and individual, which I termed 'mavericking'. The level of FMG compliance with both the process and content of the meetings ran counter to my expectations of a university context where academics are often portrayed as difficult to manage. I

also identified a set of recipients 'rules' which determined whether FMG were likely to comply with the Dean or push back, such as being treated with a level of respect.

### *1.4.2 Organisational Identity*

Organisational identity has been defined as features of the organisation that are central, distinctive and enduring over time (Albert and Whetten 1985). However, others argue that organisation identity is more dynamic and changeable (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Gioia et al. 2000; Gioia and Thomas 1996). Studies from this dynamic perspective suggest that organisational identity issues can be observed during strategic change events such as merger (Clark et al. 2010; Mantere et al. 2012). Many studies of organisational identity change adopt a sensemaking perspective (Ashforth et al. 2011; Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Mantere et al. 2012; Pratt 2000; Ravasi and Schultz 2006). Some studies focus on the re-negotiation of shared meanings through processes of leader sensemaking and sensegiving (Gioia et al. 2010; Ravasi and Schultz 2006). Corley and Gioia (2004) reveal that identity can change through labels-based change, for example, a declared intention to be 'innovative' or 'customer-centric', or cognitive level changes to the meanings underlying labels, for example, what it means to be innovative.

However, in many existing studies of identity change (for example Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Mantere et al. 2012) identity only emerges as a focus of attention during the process. Only in a small number of studies does the change leader begin with the deliberate intention of shaping a change in organisational identity (Fiol 2002; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006). With the exception of Fiol (2002), these studies do not focus on both change leader sensegiving and recipient response to understand the significance of change leader actions to any change that occurs. Thus we still know little about how change leaders can deliberately facilitate a planned change in organisational identity, which is the focus of this study.

This research examines an internal merger between an Art & Design faculty and an Architecture faculty, an event which we know from existing research will prompt issues of identity. In this study, the senior manager appeared mindful of identity issues from the start and set out explicit new labels as part of a vision for the future

merged organisation. I explore the identity change process through a dual focus on the senior manager's identity claims and recipients' meaning making. I develop a process model of intentional organisational identity change (see Figure 1-2) and show that it occurs through a process of three sequential phases of 'developing and promoting new claims', 'building new claims' and 'living the claims'.

**Figure 1-2 Process model of Deliberate Organisational Identity Change**


The model is based on a data structure (Gioia et al. 2013) built up from first order participant concepts for the change leader and recipient response, with separate first order analysis for the Architecture faculty and the Art & Design faculty. At the second order, conceptual themes were developed for the change leader, and for all recipients. From this, three sequential phases or 'aggregate dimensions' were identified: 'developing and promoting new claims', 'building new claims' and 'living the claims'. These are presented along with a first order narrative with tables of supporting quotes.

In phase 1, *developing and promoting new claims (italics denotes second order concepts from the data structure and process model)*, I identified that the Dean *formulated new claims*, by setting out his vision for a new organisational identity based on underlying values shared by both faculties, such as a commitment to 'making' and 'social engagement' and *sought buy-in* to the claims, for example, through speeches and presentations. During this time staff from both faculties engaged in different forms of *identity speculation*, such as expressing worry about whether they would still have a job. However, they also began *relating to the new claims*, including expressions of cautious optimism about Dean's vision for the future shared organisational identity. Phase 1 is largely a discursive process with the Dean developing and then articulating new claims about the faculty's future shared identity.

Phase 2, *developing and promoting new claims*, moves beyond discursive claims to introduce material changes and new work practices which provide people with guided experiences through which they begin to understand the meanings behind the Dean's claims. The Dean *develops the management team,* including a management restructure and *monitors and drives the change process,* including fortnightly FMG meetings. The recipients *implement new structures and practices*, such as a building relocation for Architecture, and a new studio system which requires significant new ways of working for Art & Design. The studio system is seen as an important way to improve quality in Art & Design and very well suited to creative learning and practice. Recipients move from a broad understanding of the Dean's identity claims to a more detailed understanding of what those claims mean for their every day lived experience, and *respond to the new reality by contesting meanings*. For example, recipients try to make sense of their experiences, some pushback and complain and some experience a sense of loss or takeover.

In Phase 3, *living the claims*, the Dean *affirms progress in delivering the claims*, for example, through press interviews about the new organisational identity and talk about how much progress has been made towards it. He also *initiates new identity consistent initiatives* such as new cross-faculty projects. For recipients, there is a period of reflection over the summer, after the intensity of the academic year which allows people to reflect on the Dean's words but also on their experiences during the year. Through a process of reflection and sensemaking they *reconcile the claims with their experiences*, for example, acknowledging the value and desirability of the new organisational identity, despite the loss of old ways of working or material changes such as giving up a much loved building location.

### *1.4.3 Identity Work*

Individual identity has been defined as a self-reflexive concern with 'who I am' (Coupland and Brown 2012). However, researchers debate whether identity is stable, or more changeable, even over relatively short periods of time (Alvesson 2010; Brown 2015). Researchers who see individual identity as more fluid show that identity issues are often triggered by significant change, which causes people to

question who they are (for example, Empson 2004; Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2016; Langley et al. 2012).

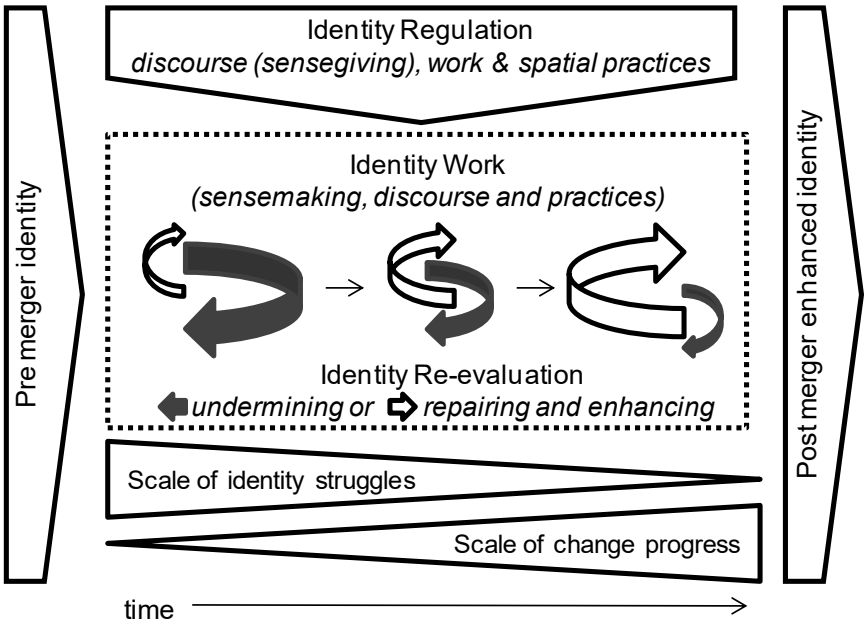
Individual identities are constructed through 'identity work' which is defined as internal, interpretive activity which repairs, strengthens or maintains people's sense of who they are (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:627; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). 'Identity regulation' refers to external forces, such as organisational practices and control, which influence identity (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). Identity work and regulation have largely been studied through discursive practices (for example, Clarke et al. 2009; Kuhn 2006; Watson 2009; Ybema et al. 2009). However, a small number of studies show other practices, such as work practices or space, can impact individual identity construction (Alvesson et al. 2008; Beech 2008; Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wasserman and Frenkel 2011; Wieland 2010). Alvesson (2010) draws on the metaphor of 'struggler' to describe the interplay between identity work and identity regulation. Research from this perspective has tended to view regulation as 'oppressive' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), particularly where it challenges existing self-identity. Existing research shows that such regulation is likely to lead to resistance which can impact organisational change outcomes, often in unintended and unwelcome ways (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown and Humphreys 2006; Brown et al. 2010; Thomas and Davies 2005). However, a small number of studies suggest that regulation could be a neutral or positive influence on identity work (Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wieland 2010).

My research focuses on a period of significant strategic change: an internal merger between an Art & Design faculty and an Architecture faculty. Consistent with prior research, individual identity issues surfaced during the change (Clark et al. 2010; Empson 2004; Mantere et al. 2012). Surprisingly, however, identity work seemed to be triggered by changes to practices as much as by discursive regulation. Also, whilst individuals experienced identity struggles, they appeared to emerge from the process with an enhanced self-identity, and elements of their struggles seemed to help to deliver the change process in line with the Dean's intent. Thus, I followed an abductive approach (Cunliffe 2011; Gioia et al. 2013; Klag and Langley 2013; Welch et al. 2013) in exploring these two interesting areas of anomaly. Firstly, why work

practices, which existing literature indicates are important, seem particularly so in my data. Secondly, why did the change recipients, who experienced difficult identity struggles, seem to come out with an enhanced self-identity at the end, and to do so in ways that appeared to help the change process to progress in line with the Dean's plans, rather than resulting in resistance and unintended consequences as existing literature suggests? I explore both discursive and non-discursive forms of regulation, and the way that identity struggles evolve over time to unexpected outcomes.

I focus on the individual identity work of the staff in Art & Design. The strategic change involved the imposition of many practices that were already established in Architecture on to Art & Design. Thus, they were more likely to experience individual identity struggles. I selected five Academics and five Academic Managers and wrote an individual narrative for each, focussed on issues of identity. Then, seeing common patterns amongst them, I wrote a composite narrative for academics and another for academic managers. The findings are presented as a summary process model in Figure 1-3 which explains, at a conceptual level, the impact of identity regulation on individual identity work during a period of strategic change. I explore the main concepts in the model using a first order narrative and supporting quotes.

**Figure 1-3 Identity Change Journey**




I identify different pre-merger identities for academics and managers. Academics

had a primary work identity as expert and experienced academic lecturers and as practitioners or researchers within their particular Arts field. Academic managers had a predominant work identity as experienced and competent managers. During the merger I identify that both academics and managers experienced identity struggles between their pre-merger identity and the identity regulation imposed by the new practices. I identify six struggles experienced by academics and six that applied to managers (see Table 1-1).

**Table 1-1 Identity Struggles**

| **Academics** | **Managers** |
|---|---|
| Struggle as opportunity: Survival to Aspiration | Struggle as opportunity: Threatened to Challenged |
| Struggle: Expert to beginner | Struggle: Confident and competent to tested and uncertain |
| Struggle: Unchallenged to challenged | Struggle: Team leader to dual FMG identity |
| Struggle: Freedom to conformity | Struggle: Prospective strategic leader to fire-fighter |
| Struggle: Student trust to mistrust | Struggle: Unaccountable to held to account |
| Struggle: Lecturer-practitioner to academic lecturer | Struggle: Desirable shared identity to undesirable imposed identity |

For each struggle I worked iteratively to understand the nature of the regulation that was prompting the identity work; I identified different forms of regulation using examples from the literature to guide and sensitise my analysis (for example, Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Beech 2008; Langley et al. 2012; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). For example, ‘student trust to mistrust’ captures the struggle academics’ experienced when their self-identity as liked and respected academic experts and hierarchical authority figures was challenged and undermined by students who were anxious and angry about the merger changes. However, despite the sense of anxiety and identity struggle, much of the identity work appeared to help to move the change forward in line with the change leader’s intent. For example, working to support students and reassure them was a means through which academics could rebuild and repair their own sense of identity as experts.

I identified that spatial changes, such as moving FMG to a shared office, had a significant impact on identity work as this changed the nature of social interaction. Identity work was also triggered by changes to everyday working practices. For example, a new curriculum undermined academics existing expertise because it was

so unfamiliar, but also increased the level of oversight and peer competition as academics felt their abilities were being judged and questioned. However, by the end of the change period, these identity struggles seemed to have largely been resolved. Academics appeared to have repaired their self-identity as expert lecturers and specialist practitioners and to have enhanced their identity as more Arts-centred lecturers. Managers had repaired their self-identity as experienced and competent managers and enhanced their self-identity as strategic leaders. For each of the struggles, I identified the nature of the resolution (see Table 1-2 Post Merger Identity). For example, managers implemented significant change during the merger and, over time, their *experience and success* helped to repair their self-identity as competent managers.

**Table 1-2 Post Merger Identity**

| **Academics Identity Strengthened by:** | **Managers Identity Strengthened by:** |
|---|---|
| Growing reputation of faculty<br>*Struggle: survival to aspiration* | Growing reputation of faculty<br>*Struggle: threatened to challenged* |
| Gained learning & experience<br>*Struggle: expert to beginner* | Experience & success<br>*Struggle: confident & competent to tested & uncertain* |
| Successfully accomplished challenges<br>*Struggle: unchallenged to challenged* | Able to balance dual identity<br>*Struggle: team leader to dual FMG identity* |
| Better understanding of benefits of conformity<br>*Struggle: freedom to conformity* | Understanding how to operate strategically<br>*Struggle: prospective strategic leader to. fire-fighter* |
| Rebuilt relationship with students<br>*Struggle: student trust to mistrust* | Meeting deadlines<br>*Struggle: unaccountable to held to account* |
| More time<br>*Struggle: lecturer-practitioner to academic lecturer* | Evidencing quality e.g. prizes<br>*Struggle: desirable shared identity to undesirable imposed identity* |

## 1.5 Contribution

This thesis makes a contribution to knowledge through the three main chapters and through the thesis as a whole. This section briefly summarises the three main areas and also the overall contribution of the thesis to knowledge of strategic change and SAP.

### *1.5.1 Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Meetings*

The first contribution is a process model that accounts for how top managers can sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving. We know that change leader sensegiving is important during strategic change initiation

(Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994). A small number of studies also show that leader sensegiving continues to be important during implementation (for example, Bartunek et al. 1999; Kezar 2013; Lundgren-Henriksson and Kock 2016; Stensaker and Falkenberg 2007). However, no other studies identified at this time offer a process model that accounts for how change leaders use sensegiving to sustain alignment between recipients' sensemaking and their own throughout the process of change implementation. For example, the systematic nature of the process and the regular meetings, afford the opportunity for more frequent sensegiving attempts. It also provides the Dean with context-rich, timely information about the change process which helps him to identify 'sensegiving gaps' (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007) between recipient sensemaking and his preferred organisational reality so he can tailor the next meeting accordingly. The Dean uses 'driving' and 'detecting' formats to alter the tempo of the meeting to suit his sensegiving needs.

Second, I contribute to understanding of sensegiving competence by demonstrating that this involves both processual skills required to establish and sustain a sensegiving system, and framing and influencing skills to utilise the system effectively. Studies have tended to focus on discursive sensegiving skills (Bartunek et al. 1999; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Monin et al. 2013; Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). A small number (for example, Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Rouleau and Balogun 2011) have also highlighted that capabilities are needed to generate effective opportunities for sensegiving and that these extend beyond the spoken word. However, my study goes further in identifying a sensegiving system which underpins sensegiving competence and has two components, the framing and influencing skills often highlighted by others, but also the processual skills to initiate and facilitate sensegiving opportunities over time. For example, through 'establishing' and 'managing the playing field', through 'driving and detecting meetings' and through different types of activities such as sense-managing, sense-building, sense-directing and sense-challenging. My findings add to understanding of the craft or skill of sensegiving as a discursive ability (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). Sensegiving in meetings happens in a small, face-to-face environment, thus sense-building (encouraging), sense-directing (informing) and challenging (redirecting) increase understanding of 'close-to' forms of leader sensegiving. I also respond to

calls to examine the interplay between leader sensegiving and recipient response (Bartunek et al. 1999; Sonenshein 2010), exploring the dynamic in the way that changes in the type of leader sensegiving impact on recipient response through changes in the level of sense-aligning, disclosing, counter-challenging, limiting and wrangling or mavericking.

Third, I contribute to SAP studies of strategic episodes, particularly the call for greater understanding of the role of strategic episodes over time (Vaara and Whittington 2012). For example, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) consider how the leader exercises authority through practices to do with agenda setting and chairing in different meetings. My paper extends this by examining occurrences of the same meeting over time and patterns of 'detecting' and 'driving' in these meetings that help to sustain the intended strategic change. Johnson et al. (2010) also consider the ceremonial nature of strategy workshops which suspend everyday work routines. I extend their work by contrasting this with meetings which occur over time and remain closely connected to everyday activities. I show that through 'sense-managing' the Dean was able to sustain the deliberate change by making relatively small changes in the 'liturgy' (agenda of driving meetings) that raised the level of 'communitas' enough to re-energise and re-focus the team. However, he did this without raising the level too much and inviting unrealistic thinking, which can occur with off-site workshops. The Dean was able to re-create much of the energy of an off-site workshop through changes that provided novelty and inspiration, particularly when contrasted with the consistency of the usual detecting meeting format.

### *1.5.2 Organisational Identity*

The research in Chapter 6 explores how senior executives intentionally drive a process of organisational identity change, and how they can facilitate this process through discursive, material and work practice interventions. The first contribution is a summary process model which reveals how intentional organisational identity change occurs. This occurs through a particular pattern in which new claims are developed and communicated discursively, and then a process is put in place which facilitates the development of meanings which moves beyond the discursive to also include material and work practice interventions. This is consistent with Fiol (2002) who finds that the new claims come first and then attachment of meanings. However,

whilst for Fiol (2002), the meanings develop experimentally, in this research the leader of the organisational identity change deliberately facilitates the process through activities designed to encourage recipients to develop meanings in line with the claims and in line with the change leaders intent. The phasing in this research also supports Corley and Gioia (2004) who suggest that cognition is more important at the launch stage of identity change, whilst action is needed for changes to take hold. This research builds on their work by demonstrating how this takes place in practice.

Second, this study contributes to understanding of the differences between how labels-based and meaning-based identity change occurs. The developing and promoting of new claims or labels centres on a discursive process whilst attaching meanings to claims moves beyond a discursive process to also include material and work practice interventions. These findings extend the work of Howard-Grenville et al. (2013) who reveal that experience is key in driving identity change, rather than cognition. This study extends this by showing how experience-based activities can be orchestrated to drive and shepherd the meaning-making phase of an intentional identity change. Third, this study shows that close involvement by managers in sensegiving can direct recipient sensemaking over time and help to drive through identity change in the way it was originally intended. Balogun and Johnson (2004) and Nag et al. (2007) highlight the importance of senior management involvement in guiding the sense making of managers, although in both cases this was not achieved successfully and led to unintended consequences for the change process. In this case, close involvement over time through regular meetings provided a means for close monitoring and close communication. Fourth, I identify a lesser role for ambiguity than in other studies (for example Fiol 2002; Gioia and Thomas 1996). Ambiguity helped to make the early claims widely appealing but did not play a role in the attachment of meanings. Fifth, the research identifies differences in the role of materiality during labels-based and meanings-based change and in doing so contributes more generally to studies of sensemaking and change. For example, in Ravasi and Schultz (2006) material artefacts provide links to the past whilst, in this research, material artefacts, such as building models and drawings represent the future and help to generate early enthusiasm for the new identity.

### *1.5.3 Identity Work*

The study in Chapter 7 explores individual identity work during a strategic change and seeks to explain why practices, which existing literature suggests are important, seem particularly so in this case and how this contributed to existing theory. I also wanted to understand why academics and managers seem to develop an enhanced sense of identity over the course of the change, despite experiencing identity struggles, and to do so in ways that appear to help to deliver the change in line with the Dean's intent. The first contribution is a summary process model which explains how individual identity change occurred over time. Pratt et al. (2006) model the process of individual identity change during a professional training programme rather than a strategic change. My study builds on this by showing that strategic change, involving significant learning, demonstrates some similar characteristics, particularly that 'identity work violations' (Pratt et al. 2006) can lead to 'positive' self-identity change rather than generating frustration or anxiety which amplifies resistance, as suggested in much existing literature (for example, Garcia and Hardy 2007; Humphreys and Brown 2002; Langley et al. 2012). Second, I build on a small number of others studies that reveal the importance of non-discursive practices in individual identity construction (Alvesson et al. 2008; Beech 2008; Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wieland 2010). In Wieland (2010) identity is socially constructed through discussion within communities. My research reveals that identity work can be triggered more intentionally through the design and implementation of work practices that increase transparency and competition in ways that are difficult to avoid. This builds on Pratt et al. (2006) who argues that when recipients are 'encapsulated' with limited alternative sources of sensemaking, other than from the change leaders, they are more likely to take on an intended identity.

My third contribution is to show that work practices are more powerful when combined with discursive forms of regulation and that the two can help recipients to work through a change process, despite painful identity struggles, in ways that enhance self-identity and help the change process. This supports Langley et al. (2012), who argue that skilful change managers might be able to reposition changes in ways that mitigate people's sense of identity loss and builds on it, by offering a process model of how this can occur in practice. I also contribute to a small number of studies that consider space as a form of identity regulation (Gotsi et al. 2010;

Langley et al. 2012; Wasserman and Frenkel 2011). For example, I show how space, such as re-location to a shared office, can be used to encapsulate sensemaking (Pratt 2000; Pratt et al. 2006) as it increases opportunities for like-minded or change leader sensegiving and limits interaction with potentially dissenting views.

### *1.5.4 Strategy as Practice*

The three detailed research questions were generated iteratively by cycling between the data and the SAP literature. Emerging themes were identified and the literature was studied to identify a possible theoretical contribution and an analytical approach, such as sensemaking, through which to analyse and interpret the empirical data. Each chapter was designed to stand alone and was selected on the strength of its individual contribution to strategy research. However, once complete, it was possible to identify a number of factors that underpin the integrative 'sum of the parts' value of the thesis. This is explored in more depth in Chapter 8. In brief, there are four areas which are summarised here: closeness to top managers, closeness to meetings over time, dynamics between managers and recipients, and the importance of both discursive and non-discursive strategising activity.

The first area is 'closeness to top managers'. SAP scholars have noted a particular gap around what 'top managers' actually do within the strategy process (Balogun et al. 2015; Balogun et al. 2016; Jarzabkowski 2008). My study contributes a detailed understanding of how a top manager interacts with his managers and how he steers and guides them over time, in order to deliver a realised change that is in line with his initial intent. The second area is 'closeness to meetings over time'. This thesis justifies Vaara and Whittington's (2012) call for longitudinal studies of strategic episodes. I demonstrate that this closeness to practice over time reveals new patterns that are not available from snapshots of individual or disparate meetings, for example, the way that ongoing opportunities for sensegiving can be established and facilitated through regular meetings. SAP research has also tended to focus on executive level meetings (Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Johnson et al. 2010; Kwon et al. 2014b). However, my work shows the importance of meetings between senior executives and their managers, and meetings which go beyond strategy formulation to guide and sustain strategic change implementation.

The third area where the thesis contributes to SAP research is the 'dynamics between managers and recipients'. An important contribution of this study is in demonstrating the importance of research which explores senior executive sensemaking and sensegiving, but also how this is interpreted and made sense of by others in their organisation as recipients and, importantly, how this interpretation might be shepherded and guided over time in line with a particular strategic intent. This is particularly important for strategic change where unexpected recipient interpretations have been shown to have consequential and unintended consequences for change outcomes (Balogun et al. 2015; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Mantere et al. 2012; Sonenshein 2010). Fourth is the 'importance of both discursive and non-discursive strategising activity'. My work demonstrates that the SAP approach, with its focus on getting close to what strategists actually do, can contribute to a fuller and more nuanced understanding of concepts such as sensemaking and identity, for example, by exploring the interplay between discursive and non-discursive sensegiving activities. Chapter 6 reveals that discourse is central during labels-based identity change whilst, working practices that change every day actions are of particular importance for developing new meanings. In Chapter 5, I show that sensegiving competence goes beyond words and includes the processual skill to set up fora for sensegiving opportunities over time. The thesis substantiates the benefits expounded by SAP scholars of data breadth, through longitudinal engagement with a single site, and data depth, through closeness to practice and immersion in the detailed 'doing' of strategising activities.

## 1.6 Structure of Chapters

This chapter explored the main findings of the thesis. The subsequent chapters are outlined below.

*Chapter 2 Literature Review*

This chapter first provides an overview of the development of the field of Strategy as Practice and my rationale for adopting a SAP approach, and second, provides an account of my own research journey which led to the choice of research site, research methodology including data collection choices, and overall focus of the research. A more detailed review of the specific literature such as meetings and

sensemaking (chapter 5), organisational identity (chapter 6) and identity work (chapter 7) is provided within the relevant main chapter.

*Chapter 3 Research Methodology*

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology including the selection of the research site, data collection and analysis. A more finely grained description of the approach taken for each of the three main chapters is provided within the relevant chapter.

*Chapter 4 Overview of Case Study Context*

Chapter 4 provides a broad overview of the research site and the main events that unfolded over time. It sets the scene and compliments the more focussed narratives which appear in the three main chapters.

*Chapter 5 Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Meetings*

This chapter, and chapters 6 and 7, are presented in a 'stand alone' format, similar to an academic journal article. This helps to underline the fact that the thesis consists of three separate studies, which each have their own contribution to knowledge, rather than three parts of a single whole. Each chapter includes within it an introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and analysis, discussion, boundary conditions, implications for practice and conclusions. Chapter 5 focuses on the nature of sensegiving by the change leader in meetings, the way that managers responded, and the role of meetings in sustaining strategic change over time.

*Chapter 6 Organisational Identity*

Chapter 6 is similar to Chapter 5 in that it can be read in isolation from the rest of thesis and should still make sense. The focus of the chapter is on a process of deliberate organisational identity change.

*Chapter 7 Identity Work*

Chapter 7 takes a narrative perspective, focussing on individual identity work which was triggered by strategic change. This chapter presents a process model developed from composite analysis of individual identity change journeys.

*Chapter 8 Conclusions*

Chapter 8 summarises the contribution of the main three chapters. It also presents

the overarching contribution of the research to the SAP field and in doing so links back to the earlier Literature Review (Chapter 2) and Methodology (Chapter 3). It also reflects on lessons learned from the process of doctoral research.

*Appendix A: Meeting Data – supporting quotes*

This contains detailed supporting quotes for Chapter 5 which are not included in the main chapter due to the length.

*Appendix B: Identity Work data - sample narrative*

This contains an example of an individual narrative, one of ten, that was produced as part of the analysis for Chapter 7 on individual identity work.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

The study began, not with a particular problem or site in mind, but with an interest in a growing area of research, the Strategy as Practice (SAP) field. As a former strategy practitioner, SAP seemed to fit closely with my own interest in understanding, at a detailed level, how organisations initiate and develop strategies; also, the recognition that strategy is a group rather than individual endeavour (Vaara and Whittington 2012). In this chapter I adopt a dual focus: First, I explore the development of the Strategy as Practice field and justify my decision to undertake research from a SAP perspective. Second, I explain how my own journey through the SAP literature shaped the focus of the overall study and informed the choice of empirical context, the research methodology and the data collection process. Over time, emergence in both the literature and the data led to the research questions for the three main chapters in this thesis. A more specific theoretical background or literature review for each of these three focal areas can be found within chapters 5, 6, and 7. These chapters explain the development of the specific research question and the justification for the choice of a particular theoretical lens from within the SAP field. However, this chapter (2) is based mainly on my reading prior to data analysis and reflects a much broader focus on Strategy as Practice as a developing scholarly field, how it can contribute to understanding of strategic change and strategising, and the range of different theoretical perspectives that might be adopted within the broad umbrella of SAP research. I have not attempted to show here how the three papers were designed, from the start, to form an overall collective contribution to the SAP field as this emerged much later in the process from reflection on the individual chapters and the overall research process. However, in Chapter 8 (Conclusions) I summarise the three papers but also reflect on the overarching contribution of this thesis to the SAP field and refer back to the early ideas in this chapter.

Please note the ‘key ideas’ boxes are not a traditional aspect of a literature review. However, they were something used during the original work and have been left in to aid understanding and as an authentic reminder of how the original thinking behind the thesis developed.

## 2.2 History of Strategy Research: Process and Content

Key Ideas to take forward: Process and Content

- Strategy process scholars developed a counter to the economics-led, classical view of strategy research
- Strategy process research is a 'close cousin' to SAP with a shared view of strategy-making as a complex, interwoven, context-sensitive, dynamic process

Strategy research as an intellectual endeavour in its own right, distinct from management research, emerged in the early 1960's with the publication of books by Chandler (1962), Ansoff (1965) and Andrews (1971) and the first issue of the journal, Long Range Planning, in September 1968 (Clarke 1997). Early work focussed on long term rational planning and forecasting and reflected both the economic stability of the time (Clarke 1997) and the adoption of science-like approaches to management research (Johnson et al. 2007; Whittington 2001; Whittington 2004). Strategy was viewed as a top down, rational, analytical process (Whittington 2001) and research was concerned with the search for relationships, for example, between the presence of strategic planning and the performance of the firm (Johnson et al. 2007). Whittington (2004:62) states that,

> "*modernism captured strategy within an epistemological straight jacket that valued scientific detachment over practical engagement, the general over the contextual, the quantitative over the qualitative.*"

Strategy research has traditionally focussed on either strategy content issues, which consider what strategy is adopted such as divestment or diversification, or strategy process issues, which consider how strategies are formulated, decisions made and changes implemented (Huff and Reger 1987; Johnson et al. 2007). The scope of this research study is concerned with strategic change which fits with a strategy process perspective. Within process research, a counter to science-like quantitative research developed through a shift in emphasis from cross-sectional research and comparative statistics, common in the social sciences, to a concern for strategy as dynamic action that develops over time (Pettigrew 1992). Researchers such as Bower (1970) and Pettigrew (1985) began to focus on the detailed context of

strategy making in single organisations and on longitudinal patterns of continuity and change over time (Bower 1970; Lewis 1988; Pettigrew 1985). Research within the process school demonstrates that strategy development is often a complex and convoluted process rather than rational and linear (Langley et al. 1995; Sminia 2009) and that strategies are often developed bottom up and emergently (Mintzberg and Waters 1985) and with non senior managers playing an important role in the process (Bower 1970; Burgelman 1983) rather than through a top down process. From this perspective, the traditional demarcation between strategy formulation (choice) and implementation (change), and between strategy content and process, are considered a hindrance rather than a help as the different elements are seen as interwoven and inseparable (Pettigrew 1992). For example, a process researcher might look at how changes in process and context explain variation in performance outcomes over time (Pettigrew 1992; Pettigrew and Whipp 1991). Whittington (2007) describes the process school as a 'close cousin' to SAP, reflecting many shared interests. In summary these include; providing a counter-balance to the dominance of economics led approaches, recognition of the importance of context, action and change over time; recognition that strategy is emergent as well as deliberate; and frequently convoluted rather than linear; the interwoven nature of process and content, formulation and implementation; as well as the idea that strategy making involves a wide range of activities and practitioners.

### 2.3 What is Strategy as Practice?

Key Ideas to take forward: What is Strategy as Practice?

- Mainstream research has tended to remain at the organisational level
- SAP research involves a deep concern with the detail of what strategists actually do and a focus on strategising as a situated social activity that is accomplished through the interactions, actions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices they draw upon
- SAP can complement existing research, such as process or resource-based perspectives, by providing insights that are more closely connected to activities that practitioners do every day

- SAP is not just about the 'micro-level' but links to the wider social 'macro' context

SAP focuses attention on human interaction and activities (Johnson et al. 2007). From a SAP perspective, strategy is something that people do, an activity, rather than something that an organisation has, a strategy (Johnson et al. 2007). For this reason SAP scholars often use the verb 'strategising' to underline the emphasis on strategy as an activity (Whittington 2003), or 'strategy-making' (Vaara and Whittington 2012). Balogun et al. (2007:209) define SAP as the study of,

> *"a situated social activity, constructed through the actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon".*

Johnson et al. (2003:15) argue that activities are,

> *"the day-to-day stuff of management. It is what managers do and what they manage. It is also what organisational actors engage in more widely. So the research agenda matches the lived world of organizational actors".*

Research from a SAP perspective seeks to explain,

> *"who strategists are, what they do and why and how that is consequential in socially accomplishing strategic activity".* (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007:19)

Johnson et al. (2003) argue that an activity is consequential to the extent that it contributes to the strategic outcomes and directions of the organisation. SAP research by, "evoking the lived experience of doing strategy from the perspective of the practitioner" can generate "theoretical explanations of how and why these experiences vary in different situations" (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008b:285).

Johnson et al. (2003) argue that strategising activities are often invisible in traditional strategy research despite the fact that they can have considerable consequences for organisations. For example, increasing speed of change and increased organisational openness and transparency requires strategy actors throughout the organisation to think deftly and act swiftly and, if they can do so, provides an important form of competitive advantage (Johnson et al. 2003). A detailed understanding of the activities that underpin skilled strategy practice can be insightful in itself, but can also complement other areas of research such as dynamic capabilities and the resource-based perspective (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2003). Johnson et al. (2003) suggest there is also pressure from strategy practitioners for research that can directly help them, for example, through providing

insights related to the activities they do every day that support them in reflecting on their own practice. Johnson et al. (2007:12) argue that,

> *"much of the mainstream research on strategy, in taking an organisational-level focus, risks becoming more and more remote from managers. A strong instrumental reason for the importance of a view of strategy more closely connected with activities is that managers manage activities".*

Johnson et al. (2003:9) also give the example of research on diversification and argue that, "the standard frames of traditional macro research are too crude to capture the subtleties of synergistic relationships". Jarzabkoswki et al. (2007:6) continue this theme and state that,

> *"research has typically remained on the macro-level of firms and markets while reducing strategy to a few causally related variables in which there is little evidence of human action".*

Examining the actions and interactions of strategy practitioners provides insights in to the role of human agency in the strategy making process, which is in keeping with a wider turn in the social sciences to 'humanise' management research and provide an important counter to prescriptive, science-like models and frameworks (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007). However, SAP is not solely concerned with individual 'micro-level' phenomena but links this to the wider social context: to 'macro-level' tools, practices and social discourses that shape individual practice (Johnson et al. 2007; Whittington 2006).

Whittington argues that whilst process and practice research share much common ground, the process school explores the formulation and implementation of organisational strategies and the processes of strategic change, whilst SAP "is much less focused on either organisations or change over time" (2007:1578). Whittington compares SAP with process research by considering Mintzberg's work on emergent strategy making and concludes that,

> *"his Processual focus on organisational outcomes diminishes strategy praxis, while marginalising strategy's practices, practitioners and the profession as a whole"* (2007:1581).

The SAP perspective considers strategy making as emergent action but focuses on the detailed activities that develop, communicate or implement strategy and consider both the intended and unintended consequences of managerial action. Johnson et al. (2003:12) argue that,

> *"The process tradition has tended to fix upon the organisational level at the*

> *expense of the practical activity of those who actually constitute the processes".*

From a SAP perspective, there is less focus than the classical rational or process schools on outcomes such as organisational performance (Whittington and Cailluet 2008; Whittington et al. 2006). It is argued that organisational performance outcomes are often simply 'artificial staging points' (Langley 2007:275). Being a skilful strategy practitioner, perhaps skilfully executing a strategy workshop, is regarded as an important achievement in itself, irrespective of whether it is possible to link that achievement to organisational outcomes (Whittington 2006). Johnson et al. (2003:10) argue for,

> *"the need to put the micro into the macro in order both to uncover plausible linkages to performance and to offer tangible guides to managerial action".*

In exploring the detailed activities occurring within the process of strategy making, SAP research naturally complements and supplements the process field and other strategy research such as the resource-based view or institutional lenses; SAP transcends traditional boundaries, such as the split between process and content and offers practical guidance to managers (Johnson et al. 2003). There are efforts to bring together academics from both the practice and process field in recognition of the symbiotic relationship between the two, for example, Strategic Management Society (SMS), Finland Special Conference, March 2010 exploring strategy process and practice intersections, and special issues on Strategy Process and Practices in the Journal of Management Studies (2011) and 'Strategy Processes and Practices: Dialogues and Intersections' in the Strategic Management Journal (forthcoming).

### 2.4 How has the SAP field developed?

Key ideas to take forward: How has the SAP field developed?

- SAP research first gained attention in 2003 with the JMS Special Issue and has since grown rapidly
- The SAP field is open, pluralistic and versatile and can be characterised less by what theory is adopted than by the empirical phenomenon that is explained
- SAP is an artificial label but it provides an 'intellectual home' for a 'dynamic community of scholars'

The SAP stream of research emerged from the convergence of a number of scholars at research conferences such as EGOS from 1999 and EIASM 2001 (Johnson et al. 2007:ix). Many papers were subsequently included in a special edition of the Journal of Management Studies on micro-strategising (Johnson et al. 2003). Since that time, special interest groups have been established at all the major strategy and management conferences and there have been a number of special issues in a range of journals[1]. A number of books have helped to define the research area including 'Strategy as practice: an activity based approach' (Jarzabkowski 2005), 'Strategy as Practice: Research Directions and Resources' (Johnson et al. 2007) and the Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice was published in 2010 with a second edition in 2015 (Golsorkhi et al. 2010; Golsorkhi et al. 2015). Teaching chapters and texts have also emerged, for example, a chapter in Exploring Corporate Strategy (Johnson et al. 2008) and in Advanced Strategic Management (Balogun et al. 2007) and Practicing Strategy (Paroutis et al. 2013). Rouleau (2013) notes that whilst the movement began in Europe, there is now an international network of scholars, supported by an active internet site (see www.sap-in.org).

Establishing a new field and legitimising it is a process worthy of study in itself (Carter et al. 2008a). The term 'Strategy as Practice' has evolved from terms that have 'been experimented with' such as 'micro-strategy' and 'activity-based view' (Johnson et al. 2007:212). Corradi (2010:266) argues that labelling a field serves both as a process of institutional isomorphism, where doing something that is similar to the work of others gives it legitimacy, and also allomorphism, where the same legitimacy provides scope for doing something different. Johnson et al. (2007:15) argue that "as work on SAP has grown, so it has seemed to go in many directions". Golsorkhi et al. (2010:1) introduce the Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice by stating that,

> *"like any emergent research approach, Strategy as Practice can either develop into a clearly defined but narrow theoretico-methodological perspective, or it can grow into an open and versatile research programme that is constantly stretching its boundaries".*

[1] Human Relations, 2007 (Strategizing); Revue Française de Gestion, 2007; Long Range Planning, 2008 (The Crafts of Strategy); Journal of Management Studies, 2011 (Processes and Practices of Strategizing and Organizing), 2014 (Placing Strategy Discourse in Context); British Management Journal, 2015 (Materializing Strategy and Strategizing Material) and Strategic Management Journal (forthcoming) Strategy Processes and Practices: Dialogues and Intersections

They argue for the latter, “although there stands a risk of eclecticism and ambiguity, we believe that the benefits of theoretical and methodological innovation…outweigh such concerns” (Golsorkhi et al. 2010:2). This stance is likely to find favour as it is not just typical of SAP but reflects the multi-disciplinary and cross-functional nature of the field of strategic management (Furrer et al. 2008; Nag et al. 2007; Nerur et al. 2008). However, Corradi’s study (2010) suggests that, over time, the SAP label might become more of an umbrella term as inevitably it will be adopted and interpreted slightly differently and different schools of Strategy as Practice research might develop. Langley in Johnson, Langley et al. (2007:212) argues that SAP offers,

> *“a broad umbrella that provides a community of congenial and like-minded colleagues…a source of legitimacy and support for ideas that might otherwise remain marginal and isolated voices in the wilderness”.*

Whilst Jarzabkowski and Whittington (2008a:104) similarly argue that SAP offers, “an open, pluralistic and frequently disputatious space for research”.

Corradi (2010:268) distinguishes between practice as an ‘empirical object’, and practice as a ‘practice lens’: “practice as a way of seeing a context, and therefore an epistemology”. This is an important distinction as the adoption of the ‘practice’ label with “its long and ramified pedigree in both philosophy and sociology” (Corradi et al. 2010:277) has lead perhaps to a narrowing of the scope of the SAP field in the eyes of some, who choose to focus on strategy through the social practice theory lens. In contrast, for Jarzabkowski el al. (2007:19), “strategy as practice as a field is characterised less by what theory is adopted than by what problem is explained”. SAP research, in both its empirical phenomenon and practice lens forms, is very much alive and well as evidenced by the journals and conference tracks previously mentioned. The heterogeneity of research has drawn criticism from some quarters (Carter et al. 2008a; Carter et al. 2008b; Corradi et al. 2010). However, the SAP field does seem to have ‘institutionalised itself’ (Carter et al. 2008a) as an ‘intellectual home’ (Langley in Johnson et al. 2007:212) for ‘a dynamic community of scholars’ (Johnson et al. 2007:209).

### 2.5 SAP as a research agenda

Key ideas to take forward: SAP as a research agenda

- There are a number of reviews which identify gaps in SAP literature and areas where new research could potentially provide valuable insight
- Each review has a different emphasis and highlights different gaps such that it is difficult to systematically determine the most important gap to address
- Rather than 'gap spotting', this research was developed through a broad understanding of the themes in existing SAP research and linking these to an interest in the work of strategy practitioners and the context of the research site

A number of different ways of conceptualising the SAP field have been developed (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Johnson et al. 2007; Vaara and Whittington 2012). These identify types of research questions and research gaps and highlight the breadth of possibilities for research in the SAP area. Each is careful to point out that the construct is defining categories which, in reality, are intertwined and overlapping and the very fact of drawing circles and boxes around things creates a sense of order that is artificial.

Johnson et al. (2007) highlight dimensions of strategy content and process and the multiple layers of micro, organisational and institutional level perspectives and highlight research that falls within each area. A number of gaps are identified and particularly the link between micro and institutional level on both the process and content dimensions. This includes such issues as; how industry norms in strategy making are shaped by academics or consultancy firms; how 'industry recipes' or common strategy trends take hold or how strategy practitioners are best produced. Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) is based on Whittington's (2006) interconnected concepts of 'praxis', 'practices' and 'practitioners' which are drawn from social practice theory and have helped to shape the agenda for SAP research. People (practitioners, managers or other actors), manage activities (praxis) which both shape and are shaped by the wider society within which this activity occurs, including the traditions, routines, norms and procedures (practices) for undertaking activities such as strategic analysis, planning or running a strategy workshop (Whittington 2006). Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) depict the concept of 'practices', 'practitioners' and 'praxis' using a Venn diagram. Exemplars are identified from the areas of overlap on the diagram and, from the lack of exemplars, one might consider that 'c', the link

between practitioners and praxis, is an under researched area (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007). Research in this area might consider who a strategist is and how that shapes and is shaped by what they do, their praxis (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007).

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) adopt a three by three matrix to categorise existing SAP research by different types of actors ('individual', 'aggregate internal' and 'aggregate external') and, similarly to Johnson et al. (2007), at three levels of 'micro' (actors), 'meso' (organisational unit or sub unit) and 'macro' (institutional). They emphasise the range of strategy actors, outside the executive level and explicitly build groups of external actors, such as consultants, in to the framework as 'aggregate external' (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009). Significant gaps identified include; research into the role and contribution of external actors to organisational strategy both as aggregate groups and as individuals; research on material practices such as use of PowerPoint, flipcharts and other artefacts; and finally that outcome research has tended to focus on strategy process outcomes rather than personal, group, organisational or institutional outcomes (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009).

More recently, Vaara and Whittington (2012) adopted the practices, practitioner and praxis structure to review the SAP literature. The paper title "Taking Social Practices Seriously" is a good reminder that a literature review is in itself a subjective exercise, often with its own implicit or explicit agenda. In this case, the paper accentuates the social practice theory view of SAP and argues that,

> *"in one way or another, the human actor is never a discrete individual detached from context, but rather a social being whose possibilities are defined by the practices in which he or she is immersed…Practice theorists particularly emphasise how these underlying practices can have significant but hidden effects" (Vaara and Whittington 2012:288)*.

They reiterate the importance of research from a social practice perspective, as well as the role of materiality, emergence in strategy-making, and a call for more critical analysis (Vaara and Whittington 2012:25).

These reviews provide a broad overview of the SAP research agenda, a guide to promising avenues of research and an insight into some differences in opinion or emphasis. However, the breadth of SAP research and different ways of dissecting it evidenced here makes it difficult to identify a clear research gap from the literature.

Johnson et al. (2007), inevitably perhaps because of the way the framework is constructed, identifies gaps around the connections between strategy practice and strategy content. Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) dedicate three out of nine segments to external strategy actors, such as consultants, and again a gap is identified in this area. Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) adopt a Venn diagram which emphasises the overlapping nature of research and again, gaps are identified around these overlaps, such as praxis and practitioners.

To suggest that the SAP field can be neatly captured in a simple matrix risks being overly ambitious or reductionist. Jarzabkowski et al. (2007:14) talk of "clearly demarcating what the analysis seeks to explain" but it could be more clearly acknowledged that this often happens only in retrospect, once the data has been interpreted and the final thesis produced. The categorisation of existing empirical research is post-publication, when it is possible to see the focus of the research and the contribution to knowledge in detail. However, strategising is a rich, overlapping and intertwining mix of activities, actors, processes and tools and the nature of interpretive research is often evolving and exploratory. So, the idea that it is possible to find a gap and then define and undertake research that falls clearly and precisely within that gap could lead a researcher to focus their gaze too narrowly at the start of a research project and might lead the researcher to discount interesting, unusual and insightful data. From a critical perspective, it is clear that there are many ways of defining SAP research gaps. There is too much that is under researched, too little over researched to justify a deep and systematic hunt for gaps as a basis for justifying further research.

Dittrich et al. (2015) argue that 'progressive coherence', where existing literature can be shown to have established a body of work around a particular theoretical or empirical perspective, is the most common means of situating new research with the SAP field and helps to develop cumulative knowledge. Kilduff (2006) argues that good theory stems from engagement with problems that the researcher finds interesting rather than through gaps in the literature. Similarly, Balogun et al. (2003) suggest that research might consider a phenomenon that is deemed important in the light of the literature review but also of importance and interest to the organisation under study and to the researcher. Rather than identifying a significant gap, at this

stage, the research agenda for this study was shaped by a process which involved cycling between the broad area of interest around strategy practitioners and their work, the themes identified in reviews of existing SAP and process research, the empirical context of the research site, and included consideration of what was interesting to both the researcher and the organisation under study. The next section will explore the development of the narrower research topics for this thesis.

## 2.6 Narrowing the Research Focus

Key Ideas to take forward: Narrowing the Research Focus

- The research will focus on practitioners and their activities in developing and socially accomplishing strategic change, in this case an internal merger
- The contextual features that drove the narrower literature search include studies that consider: strategic change such as merger, a range of strategy actors, a pluralistic context such as a university, and a cognitive theoretical lens such as sensemaking

Initially the research began as a study of how strategy practitioners intervene in the generation, formulation, development and progression of strategic initiatives. This developed from the researchers own interest in studying strategy practitioners and an interest, therefore, in SAP research. Delivering strategic initiatives is something every organisation grapples with and therefore of interest to practitioners as well as academics. A research site was sought which was undergoing significant strategic change such that it was possible to observe strategy work at first hand and at a micro level. The researcher sought an organisation with management layers or a business unit large enough to have a range of different strategy actors such as both senior and middle managers.

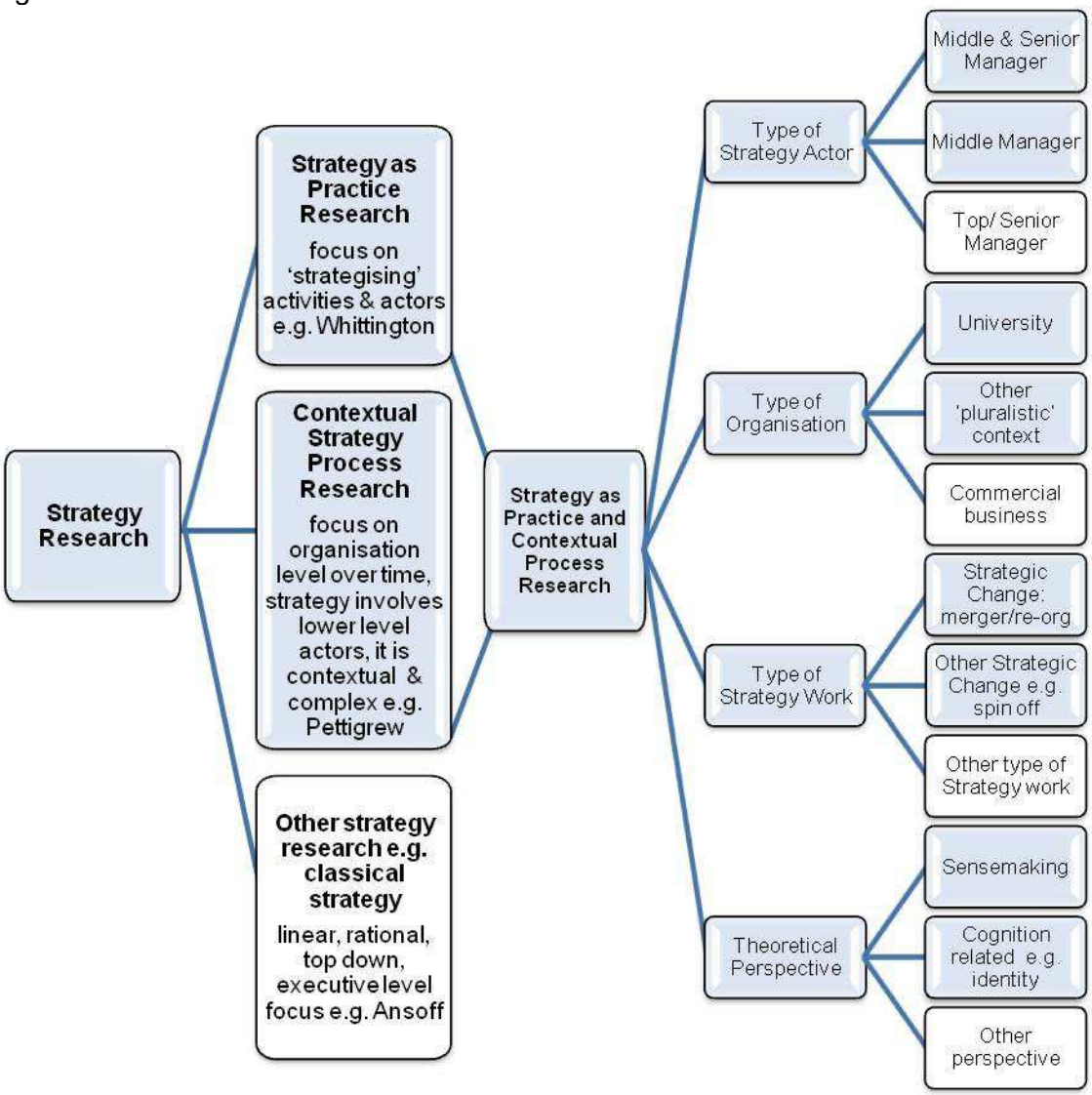
The decision to approach a university, rather than any other type of organisation, was a secondary consideration (both private and public sector organisations were originally approached). However, the university site was selected because it provides a rich and complex pluralistic context with diverging goals, cultures, strengths and weaknesses and because the site selected had a significant amount of strategic change taking place over the next year to shape and implement a major re-

organisation, an internal merger. It would demand a high level of strategising competence to manage the merger effectively and as such had the potential to provide a very rich and interesting study of strategy practice. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) argue that large public universities are useful research sites as they are generally difficult to manage. They typically have pluralistic goals, complex power and political issues and staff who expect a level of academic freedom and autonomy. The nature of the re-organisation also meant that the change had reasonably well defined boundaries and scope within the much larger overall university, such that the researcher could keep the scope of the research to a size which enabled close observation. However, it became clear that, whilst a number of distinct initiatives could be identified within the merger process, the overall merger was the primary focus of concern for the practitioners. It was effectively one very large initiative with sub-streams, rather than a group of quite separate and distinct initiatives. The emphasis on strategic initiatives was changed as it seemed to impose a language and a body of literature on to the site rather than focussing, for example, on the strategic change literature that was a more natural fit.

Having established both a research topic area and a site, it was possible to undertake a deeper review of the relevant research literature and to see how this research could make a significant contribution to this narrower body of existing work. A systematic and rigorous approach was taken to identify and review academic literature that might shape and inform the study (Randolph 2009; Saunders et al. 2007). Four categories were used to identify existing strategy research that seemed to be particularly close to the proposed research (see Figure 2-1 below). Strategy process studies and SAP studies (whether they explicitly used that term or not) relating to strategic change such as merger or re-organisation or other types of strategy change such as spin-off were identified under ‘type of strategy work’, universities were identified as ‘type of organisation’, ‘type of actors’ pinpointed research that focused on a range of practitioners such as middle and senior managers and fourthly, ‘theoretical perspective’ was added to consider whether a cognitive theoretical perspective such as sensemaking had been applied. For each category there is the top box (highlighted in the diagram below) that most closely matches the proposed research e.g. universities, a second box which is a close match e.g. other pluralistic contexts and a third box which is for anything that is not

such an obvious link. Research that is closely aligned to all the top boxes e.g. a SAP study examining middle managers in a university, undergoing a strategic restructuring and taking a sensemaking perspective was considered to be particularly relevant.

Figure 2-1 Literature Review Focus




Based on wide reading around the four categories and discussion with other strategy academics, a number of key academic journal articles and key authors were identified. For key authors, such as Paula Jarzabkowski, Richard Whittington and Julia Balogun, a systematic search was made for all their journal articles. Searches were made by keyword, such as 'strategic change' and 'sensemaking' (using Figure 2-1) in databases of academic articles and also by reviewing the reference lists of key articles that had already been identified. Each academic article was uploaded to

EndNote for ease of referencing and searching and to NVivo for ease of categorising and marking useful passages. The hope was that this systematic approach would help in ensuring that the most appropriate and relevant existing literature was reviewed but also, as and when new literature was published or came to light, it would provide a way of assessing its relevance and justifying its inclusion or exclusion (Boote and Beile 2005). The nature of interpretive research means that it is difficult to predict the exact type of data that will be generated during the research fieldwork and thus identify the most relevant existing empirical and theoretical research (Langley 1999; Miles et al. 2013). This literature continued to be reviewed and refined and updated as themes began to emerge from the primary field data and as more up to date research was published.

The next section will consider the literature from the main areas of my initial review: studies of strategic change and sensemaking, studies of senior and middle managers and studies of universities and internal mergers. This work is of relevance as it shaped my research methods, particularly data collection. During data collection, more detailed themes emerged which eventually led to the literature reviews in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

## 2.7 Strategic Change, Sensemaking and Identity

Key Ideas to take forward: Strategic Change, Sensemaking and Identity

- Process research on strategy formulation and implementation converged on the notion that change is a complex, political, context-sensitive and incremental
- Strategic change can be understood as a process which requires a cognitive shift as organisational members interpret and make sense of the change
- An important role in implementing change, is to develop a shared interpretive scheme that aligns with the strategy through sensegiving and sensemaking
- Organisational Identity can influence sensemaking during strategic change

Strategic implementation or strategic change can be defined as a substantial shift in strategic direction which requires the revision of the organisation's purpose, goals or objectives, and typically involves changes to organisational structures and processes (Gioia et al. 1994). Pettigrew (1987:668) defines strategic change as a magnitude of

alteration in the “culture, or strategy, and structure of the firm, recognising the second order effects, or multiple consequences of any such changes”. How strategic change is formulated and implemented is a phenomenon of interest to both scholars and practitioners because, it is argued, such change is disruptive and complex, holds a significant degree of uncertainty and risk, and involves attempts by organisational leaders to change the way people act and think at the individual and collective level (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 2012). The importance of strategic change is underlined by Van de Ven and Poole (1995) who state that explaining how and why organisations change has been a key and enduring focus for management scholars. Sonenshein (2010) argues that strategic change implementation is one of the most important activities undertaken by an organisation which, if successful, can lead to transformation and growth but can also result in catastrophic failure and organisational demise. Vaara and Whittington (2012:320) note that “SAP researchers have made good progress in first rediscovering and then exploring strategic planning processes. There is less research so far on other key processes such as leadership or strategic change”.

Early strategy process studies tended to focus on either strategy decision-making (formulation and choice) or strategy implementation (change) (Pettigrew 1992). Pettigrew (1992) notes that choice or decision-making scholars (for example, Bower 1970; March and Simon 1958; Mintzberg 1978) began to evidence the role of non-rational behaviour, politics and chance in the strategy process. Strategic change scholars focussed on why there seemed to be gaps between formulation of strategy and what was ultimately implemented, and why overall strategy development in organisations seemed to exhibit patterns of change and continuity over time (Bartunek et al. 2011; Pettigrew 1992). Pettigrew (1992) notes that these change studies (for example, Johnson 1987; Pettigrew 1985; Pettigrew and Whipp 1991) were similar to the decision-making studies in suggesting that underlying strategy processes were not rational and analytical. The distinction between formulation and implementation lessened as scholars from both perspectives converged around a shared understanding that the strategy process was complex, incremental, political and contextual (Pettigrew 1992). Johnson (1990:183) notes a growing awareness amongst scholars that the management of strategic change involves not just rational planning approaches but an understanding of the “cognitive, cultural and political

context" in which managerial action takes place, although there were relatively few studies at this time. From a cognitive perspective, strategic change involves "a radical, discontinuous shift in interpretive schemes" sometimes referred to as 'second-order' change (Bartunek 1984:356). New studies emerged taking a cognitive orientation, initially from a process perspective (for example, Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 1994) and later from the emerging SAP perspective (for example, Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005). These studies seek to understand how organisational members 'make sense' of the change in a way that fits with their system of meaning or interpretive scheme (Bartunek 1984; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Porac et al. 1989). Sensemaking is concerned with the search for meaning as a way of dealing with uncertainty (Weick et al. 2005). Balogun et al. (2014) argue that the sensemaking lens aids understanding of the,

> *"linkages between the linguistic and cognitive, the language and the mind, from a process perspective".*

Whilst Maitlis (2005:21) argues that sensemaking is,

> *"a fundamentally social process (in which) organisation members interpret their environment in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively".*

Brown et al. (2015:266) suggests that there is in fact no formally agreed definition of sensemaking but,

> *"an emergent consensus that sensemaking refers generally to those processes by which people seek plausibly to understand ambiguous, equivocal or confusing issues or events".*

Existing research reveals that strategic change requires a cognitive shift as organisational members interpret and make sense of the change (Bartunek 1984; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Porac et al. 1989). Thus, an important role in implementing change, is to develop a shared interpretive scheme that aligns with the strategy (Mantere et al. 2012). This role often resides with the top team, CEO or change leader who is typically responsible for articulating the need for change and the nature of change (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 1994; Mantere et al. 2012). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) focus on strategic change initiation and argue that sensemaking and sensegiving activities are a key part of the CEO's role in driving the strategic change process and facilitating the interpretation of a meaning in line with the desired strategic direction and vision. Sensegiving requires discursive skill and rhetorical competence (Rouleau and Balogun 2011) although this is an area

that is still relatively underexplored (Balogun et al. 2014).

Meetings may also offer an important arena for sensemaking as they offer an opportunity for strategy actors to share and discuss ideas and present arguments (Kärreman and Alvesson 2001; Seidl and Guerard 2015; Weick 1995). This is particularly relevant in a university context where meetings are a common form of communication and coordination (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 1994; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008). Existing research also reveals that strategic change is influenced by sensemaking and sensegiving from stakeholders other than the CEO and change leader (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). Balogun and Johnson's (2004) study reveals that middle manager sensemaking can constrain and enable the strategic change process in unexpected ways, leading to unintended results. Their research recognises the importance of interpretation, the difficulty of getting people to reorient their way of thinking, and the fact that change recipients are active sensemakers who interpret change in their own way, particularly in the absence of guidance from senior managers (Balogun and Johnson 2004). However, few studies of sensemaking and sensegiving have focussed on strategy implementation rather than initiation or on interaction between senior and middle managers.

Studies have found that identity issues influence sensemaking and thus impact organisational change processes (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996). Gioia et al. (2013:123) define organisational identity as research concerned with "who we are as an organisation". For example, in Dutton and Dukerich (1991), the New York Port Authority's identity shaped the way people interpreted a homelessness issue: they saw it as a threat to valued aspects of the organisation's identity. This impacted the way people made sense of the issue and encouraged them to make it a priority and to invest time and money in resolving the homelessness problem. Studies by Gioia have continued to demonstrate the importance of identity in processes of strategic change and sensemaking (Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2012; Gioia et al. 2010).

### *2.8 Senior and Middle Managers*

Key Ideas to take forward: Senior and Middle Managers

- Strategic change is socially accomplished through both change leader sensegiving and recipient response
- SAP studies have tended to focus on middle managers with few studies examining the interaction between senior and middle managers

From a classical perspective, strategy is a top down, rational, analytical process where upper echelons of management conceive strategies and plans, and lower levels implement them (Mantere and Vaara 2008; Whittington 2001). This view is challenged by process school scholars who argue that strategies are often developed bottom up and emergently (Mintzberg and Waters 1985) and with non senior managers playing an important role in the process (Bower 1970; Burgelman 1983). Floyd and Wooldridge (1996), for example, explore middle managers' role in the strategy process and identify four strategic roles: championing, synthesising, facilitating and influencing. Following the process school, SAP research takes a broad definition of who is a strategist and insists that strategy making outcomes arise, "from the activities of distributed actors within the firm, with their potentially divergent and competing interests" (Jarzabkowski 2005:28). However, whilst process research has tended to focus at the organisational level, SAP research explores a range of actors and examines what they actually do (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2007; Whittington 2007). Mantere (2005), for example, focuses at the individual level and identifies strategy 'champions' across a range of organisational levels, with just under one third of operative level staff engaging in championing activities.

Studies reveal that strategic change is socially accomplished through both change leader activity and recipient response (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Mantere et al. 2012; Sonenshein 2010). Mantere (2008) argues that strategy is fuelled by social interaction between multiple actors at senior and non senior levels. This distributed view of strategising had led SAP researchers to consider how strategy-making occurs in different parts of the organisation, such as at the centre and the periphery (Regnér 2003), or within different sub-units in the same organisation (Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009).

SAP research, from a sensemaking perspective, has tended to focus on middle managers (for example, Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). This reflects a scholarly concern with the gap between formulation and implementation (Bartunek et al. 2011; Pettigrew 1992) and the role of non senior managers in the strategy process. Balogun and Johnson (2004) argue that middle managers have an important impact on the strategy process, particularly through their sensemaking, but that these strategy roles tend to be informal rather than formal, for example, impacting the strategy process through conversations and sharing of experiences and opinions with others. Lacking the formal role authority of seniors, Rouleau and Balogun (2011) demonstrate that middle managers' strategic influence is related to their discursive competence: their ability to communicate in a way that is compelling within their particular context. Whilst SAP research has tended to focus on middle managers, complementary process research, such as Gioia's work on sensemaking, strategic change and organisational identity change has tended to focus on senior managers (Clark et al. 2010; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994; Labianca et al. 2001). However, there are still relatively few studies of strategic change that focus on both the change leader's attempt to implement change and how recipients' interpret and respond to these activities, even though there is evidence that this interaction is important.

### *2.9 University Internal Merger*

Key Ideas to take forward: University Internal Merger

- Merger is a form of strategic change which often provides the stimulus for second order cognitive change and sustained social interaction over time
- Existing research demonstrates that universities are an interesting pluralistic context where complex social interaction often occurs

Mergers have long been of interest to both process and practice researchers (examples include Bartels et al. 2006; Clark et al. 2010; Elstak et al. 2015; Langley et al. 2012; Maguire and Phillips 2008; Mantere et al. 2012; Seo and Hill 2005; Vaara 2003; Vaara et al. 2005; van Vuuren et al. 2010). Clark et al. (2010) explore a

merger between two healthcare organisations as a process of organisational identity change and demonstrate that a transitional identity can help to encourage a shift in thinking from ‘us and them’ to ‘we’. Mantere (2012) examines an aborted merger between two business units through a sensemaking lens. Strategic change research has also included studies of internal restructure and re-organisation (Balogun 2003; Balogun 2006; Balogun 2007; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005). These studies have focussed on sensemaking and cognition, particularly the way that lateral discussions and sharing of stories between middle managers shapes the outcomes of top down imposed change in ways that are unintended and difficult to manage or predict (Balogun 2006).

The word ‘merger’ is often used to describe corporate level, inter-organisational restructuring involving the coming together of previously separate legal entities (for example, Clark et al. 2010; Maguire and Phillips 2008; Vaara and Tienari 2011). ‘Merger’ can also refer to intra-organisational restructuring where parts of an organisation, such as a business-unit or division, which have previously operated with some degree of separation, are brought more closely together. In this case the term ‘internal merger’ may be used (for example, Bartels et al. 2009; Bartunek and Franzak 1988; Hailey and Balogun 2002). Bartunek and Franzak (1988) refer to the restructuring of districts (provinces) within a Catholic religious order whilst in Bartels et al. (2009) 13 university divisions (faculties) are merged into 5. In existing research the distinction between inter-organisational and intra-organisational is not always explicit. For example, Elstak et al. (2015) use the term ‘merger’ rather than ‘internal merger’ to refer to the joining of a previously autonomous business unit with its parent company. Similarly, Bartels et al. (2006) refer to a ‘merger’, albeit the study concerns the conjoining of regional police divisions into a single supra-regional organisation. Indeed, in the public sector the line between ‘inter’ or ‘intra’ can be difficult to distinguish as units may be government owned and funded, but structurally and legally separate.

On the surface, a corporate ‘inter-organisational’ merger may differ significantly from an ‘intra’ case in that it faces more regulatory and legal hurdles from external stakeholders, for example, in order to gain government approval. However, whether ‘inter’ or ‘intra’, mergers often share similar underlying phenomena, such as

employees who experience the merger as a fear or threat (Bartels et al. 2006), and a scale of transformation which triggers second order change to shared interpretive schemes (Bartunek 1984). It is these underlying phenomena which make both forms of merger of interest to strategy researchers, regardless of the 'intra' or 'inter' category. For example, in Clark et al. (2010) an inter-organisational merger occurs between two separate Healthcare organisations and years of intense rivalry makes it more difficult to develop a new shared organisational identity. In Langley et al. (2012) an internal merger occurs between two units of a teaching hospital. In this case the rivalry is still intense and identity issues are still prominent, albeit the issues arise between surgical nurses and medical nurses. Existing studies of 'internal merger' share much in common with other types of merger and there is often little distinction made between the two. Both 'inter' and 'intra' studies contribute more generally to our understanding of strategic change as both are an important means through which to observe second-order cognitive change.

From a process and practice perspective, a number of studies of universities are authored or co-authored by Dennis Gioia or Paula Jarzabkowski. From a process perspective, Gioia considers strategic change in universities, focussing on top management teams (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994; Labianca et al. 2001). A number of these studies take a sensemaking perspective (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994). From a practice perspective, Jarzabkowski has published a number of studies based on top management teams in UK universities (Jarzabkowski 2003; Jarzabkowski 2005; Jarzabkowski 2008; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Jarzabkowski and Sillince 2007; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002). For example, Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002) describes how the top team at Warwick University formulate and implement strategy and explores the socially constructed and interpretive nature of strategic action.

There is ample evidence that universities afford the opportunity to observe complex social interaction and distributed strategising activity (Jarzabkowski 2005; Jarzabkowski and Fenton 2006) whilst merger drives the need for sustained interaction over time and enables the researcher to observe strategic change as it unfolds. However, there are few studies of both universities and merger, and few that

benefit from the richness of strategy practitioners in terms of artists and architects that are present in this research.

## 2.10 Conclusion

I began with an interest in understanding, at a detailed level, how strategy practitioners develop and implement strategy, and this led to an interest in the Strategy as Practice field. Building on the foundations of strategy process research, SAP provides a counter to the science-like, economics-led, classical view of strategy research and views strategy-making as a complex, interwoven, context-sensitive, dynamic process. However, SAP differs from traditional process research in placing the strategy practitioner, and the activities they manage, centre stage. In doing so it complements mainstream process research by providing insights that are more closely connected to activities that practitioners do every day and connecting these with wider social patterns. Having explored a number of models that identify the gaps in the literature, it is clear that the field is relatively new and most areas are under-researched. The choice of focus was therefore an area that was seen to be of interest and relevance to existing SAP studies, to the researcher and to the practitioners being observed, and that was a good fit with the research site. It was decided to follow the merger between the art and architecture faculty and focus on the development and implementation of this strategic change. This is an identifiable and bounded piece of strategy work which was large enough in scope to include a range of different strategy actors but small enough to enable detailed observation by one person. The study was then articulated as a broad research question drawing on the definitions of the SAP field from Balogun et al. (2007) and Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) to provide a research topic that was clearly grounded in a SAP perspective. This research is,

> "*a study of strategic change development and progression as a situated activity, that seeks to plausibly explain how strategy work is socially accomplished through the actions and interactions of senior and middle managers and the situated practices they draw upon".*

At this point, the literature was revisited and refined and a search was conducted for strategy research that involved strategic change, sensemaking, senior and middle managers and the university and merger context. The focus on sensemaking derived

from both process and SAP research which reveals that strategic change requires a cognitive shift as organisational members interpret and make sense of the change. Research suggests that an important role in implementing change is to develop a shared interpretive scheme that aligns with the strategy through sensegiving and sensemaking. Such a shift often requires negotiation and discussion between different strategy actors, such as senior and middle managers. Existing SAP studies, in exploring the gap between strategy formulation and implementation, have tended to focus on middle managers. There are fewer studies exploring senior managers and fewer still examining the interaction between the senior and middle managers. Existing studies also support the choice of a university merger to observe complex pluralistic social interaction over time.

However, as explained in the introduction to this review, the literature review has also been an ongoing piece of work. As data were collected and themes start to emerge, three more detailed questions were developed and each became a separate chapter in the research.

- How do senior executives sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving in change management meetings? (Chapter 5)
- How can senior executives intentionally drive a process of organisational identity change? How can a change leader facilitate the process through discursive, material and work practice interventions? (Chapter 6)
- How do individuals make the transition to a new organisation identity as part of strategic change? In particular, why do practices, which existing literature suggests are important, seem particularly so in this case and why does identity struggle seem to lead an enhanced self-identity for academics and managers and to help to deliver an intended change? (Chapter 7)

The detailed questions above were refined over time and a literature review for each is contained within the relevant chapter. It was known from the existing strategy research that change such as merger, particularly through groups such as artists and architects, might generate issues such as organisational or individual identity, and that meetings might be a useful forum for observing sensemaking and sensegiving in a university. However, this could not be assumed before data collection started. Therefore, the broad research question above was used as a basis for developing

the research methodology and methods, and a pool of data was collected which was consistent with a SAP perspective, such as detailed, close observation over time of strategy actors and their activities and reflections, that could later be used to address more specific questions. The development of the research methodology is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

# Chapter 3: Research Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This study developed from an initial focus on strategic change initiatives to an evolving focus on three different areas of interest: sensemaking and meetings, organisational identity change and individual identity work. The research design, which was intended to facilitate this more emergent approach, is discussed in this chapter. Justification is provided for an interpretive, qualitative approach that is exploratory and inductive and seeking to build theory on sensemaking, organisation identity and change. The rationale for selecting a real-time, longitudinal, single site case study is explained as well as the criteria for site selection. I also explore the development of the data collection plan and the choice of meeting observations, interviews and documents, as the main methods of data collection and outline the approach to data analysis. However, specific details of data analysis for the research questions in the three main chapters 5, 6 and 7, are described separately within the relevant chapter. This chapter also considers issues of trustworthiness and generalisability relevant to qualitative research.

## 3.2 Research Methodology

The research involves the study of social interaction and the doing of strategy work over time. This has driven the choice-making process, beginning with the selection of an interpretive, qualitative approach. Johnson et al. (2007) argue that consideration of people in complex interaction tends to require an approach that is interpretive, in-depth and qualitative to try and capture a rich understanding of the 'doing' of strategy. The interpretive paradigm is based on a subjective view that the world exists but people construe it in very dissimilar ways (Cohen et al. 2007). The subjectivist approach focuses, not on a positivist desire to discover universal laws, but on multiple interpretations of single events and a concern with how people 'give meaning to, interact with, and construct their world' (Cunliffe 2011:649). Qualitative data can capture rich detail that is lacking in more coarse grained quantitative approaches (Langley 2007; Langley and Abdallah 2012). Qualitative data can also be used to examine the 'what' and 'when' of change and to probe more deeply into the why and how (Pettigrew 1990), the underlying tacit 'know-how' (Balogun et al.

2003), and participants thoughts and feelings about unfolding events (Langley 1999).

The term ‘inductive’ is used to describe qualitative work where theory is developed from the data, and to position it in contrast to ‘deductive’ theory where data is used to confirm or disconfirm a theoretical hypothesis (Langley 1999; Welch et al. 2013). However, Langley (1999) argues against rigid categorisation between inductive and deductive and suggests that qualitative theory building comes from three sources; both data-driven and theory-driven approaches which might be used iteratively in cycles or simultaneously, and from generative inspiration or a creative leap. More recently this generative element has been described as a ‘conceptual leap’ (Klag and Langley 2013). Closely linked to this, the term ‘abductive’, originally coined by pragmatist Charles Peirce, has been used to describe the process of theory developed from qualitative data as a more tacit, human process of puzzlement, surprise and insight (Cunliffe 2011; Gioia et al. 2013; Klag and Langley 2013; Welch et al. 2013). Cunliffe (2011) describes abduction as an implicit approach to interpretation that oscillates between theory and practice with each being informed by the other. Klag and Langley (2013) suggest the term ‘inductive’ underplays the role of existing theory and imagination, whilst abductive, is a ‘discovery-oriented’ process that inherently includes both inductive and deductive as iterative steps. In this thesis the term ‘inductive’ is used, not in the sense of developing theory solely from the data, but in the broader sense captured by Langley (1999). The term is used to denote a primary focus on the empirical data in the process of theory development, consistent with a Strategy as Practice (SAP) perspective but with simultaneously a primary concern with getting close to practitioners and what they do (Johnson et al. 2007). For example, it was interesting that the Dean deliberately set out from the start to establish a new shared identity for the newly merged faculty. Consistent with Langley (1999) theory building involved cycles of induction, working from the data, and deduction, working from the theory, to develop an understanding of how he did that.

Closely linked to the term ‘inductive’ is the term ‘exploratory’ which Welch et al. (2013:258) argue is problematic as so few qualitative studies are ‘a journey into the unknown’ and many add to an existing body of literature. This stems in part from a historic positivist dichotomy between science as either discovery or verification

(Welch et al. 2013). Welch et al. (2013) suggest that, from an interpretive perspective, 'exploratory' is often associated with identifying a gap in the existing literature. Similarly here, the term exploratory is used to contrast the research with theory verification and to acknowledge that the research draws on existing literature but also identifies and addresses a research gap. This process of theory building most closely represents theory 'elaboration', in that it draws on existing conceptual ideas and studies but is not founded on a formal hypothesis, and it generates novel contributions, such as a process model of deliberate identity change, which could form the basis of future research, but unlike theory 'generation' the findings are not presented as a formal hypothesis (Bluhm et al. 2011; Lee 1999).

### 3.3 Research Strategy

A real-time, longitudinal, single site case study approach was adopted to empirically explore the research question, consistent with a well established body of process and practice research (Langley 2007). Process research has tended to adopt a longitudinal approach to explore how organisational change evolves over time; to understand not just what happened and when, but how and why, and to identify both the chronological development and underlying analytic patterns and themes (Langley 1999; Pettigrew 1990). Rich, qualitative data can be particularly helpful in capturing temporally evolving phenomena (Langley 1999; Langley and Abdallah 2012). Real-time data also enables the collection of reflections and perceptions, as well as chronological events, and facilitates the capture of more fine grained nuance and details (Balogun et al. 2003; Langley 1999). However, in the late 80's and early 1990's strategy research was still predominantly from a normal science perspective with most journals demanding large quantitative studies (Bettis 1991; Crook et al. 2006). Johnson et al. (2003) argue that strategy process research, such as Pettigrew's (1985) study of continuity and change at ICI or Bower's (1970) small sample study of resource allocation helped to legitimise in-depth studies. From around 1999 there has been wider acceptance of qualitative management research in general (Bluhm et al. 2011; Welch et al. 2013), with a growing number of single site cases in top publications such as the Academy of Management Journal (for example, Howard-Grenville et al. 2013; Mantere et al. 2012; Smets et al. 2015; Smets et al. 2012; Sonenshein 2010).

Studies from a Strategy as Practice (SAP) perspective, involving the examination of participants in complex interaction over time, requires closer and deeper contact with people doing strategy than with many other research approaches (Johnson et al. 2007; Langley and Abdallah 2012). Within the SAP field, single site case studies have been used successfully to generate valuable insight (for example Balogun and Johnson 2004; Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Kwon et al. 2014; Rouleau 2005). Rouleau (2005), for example, studied a Canadian women's clothing manufacturer and spent 4 days a week for six months observing the company in real-time as it went through a strategic change. She attended meetings and conducted interviews in order to gain insight into how middle managers made sense of change on a daily basis. In Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002), six years of retrospective data was combined with one year of real-time observation, which included interviews, observation of meetings and shadowing, to understand how the top management team formulated and implemented strategy.

### 3.4 Site Selection

The main criterion for site selection was that the organisation must be implementing strategic change initiatives which it was possible to follow over time, and that the organisation was big enough that these changes would involve a range of different strategy actors such as middle and senior managers. The other criteria were that it must be prepared to grant access and finally, that it was close enough that I could visit frequently. Pettigrew (1990) suggests that choosing a site is a mixture of 'planned opportunism' involving intent, shaped by the research question, good fortune and practical constraints. Other desirable qualities are; a case where progress is 'transparently observable' (Pettigrew 1990), cases that offer high potential for developing new insight into an understudied phenomenon (Yin 2013), and cases with willing commitment from research partners (Balogun et al. 2003). Langley and Abdallah (2012) argue that in-depth studies require particularly good access to ensure data richness and note that researchers, such as Gioia, who have used their own institutions as case sites have benefitted in this way.

Access was granted to Unik (a pseudonym), a UK university, by the university's Vice Chancellor. Unik is a former polytechnic which gained university status in 1992.

Whilst access included the wider university and executive team, the case study selected, after discussion with the Vice Chancellor, focuses on an internal merger taking place between the Art & Design (A&D) faculty and the Architecture faculty. The Vice Chancellor was implementing a strategy to reduce the overall number of faculties and create larger units that could operate with more devolved authority, but also with more financial transparency, and with greater accountability for performance. This particular project began in October 2010 with the retirement of the Dean of the Art & Design faculty. The Vice Chancellor chose to use this as an opportune moment to bring the Art & Design and Architecture faculties together under one conjoint Dean, the current Dean of Architecture. It is the implementation of this internal merger by the conjoint Dean that is the focus of the research.

Art & Design was significantly bigger than Architecture with respective incomes in 2010 of approximately £16.5m and £5m, and academic staff costs of £4.4m (A&D) and £2m (Architecture). This was also reflected in student numbers with about 740 students graduating from A&D in 2010 (across c50 undergraduate and 30 postgraduate programmes) and 285 from Architecture (across less than 5 undergraduate and c10 postgraduate programmes). The largest course for A&D, by 2010 graduation, was Bachelor of Arts (BA) Fine Art and for Architecture it was the Professional Diploma in Architecture (RIBA Part 2).

Architecture was located in a stand-alone building; about 5 minutes walk from the main university. However, the lease was due for renewal and they had outgrown this building and were also located in additional temporary accommodation close-by the main university. A&D was based in two buildings which were close to each other within an area that had a growing local arts community and a prestigious small gallery close by; about a 20-30 minute drive from the Architecture faculty. The Dean proposed the move of Architecture into the A&D buildings. Cost savings would result from better utilisation of space. However, he also secured funds from the university to enhance the A&D buildings. After developing a list of options and consulting with staff, the Dean put forward a new faculty name to the Vice Chancellor for agreement. A formal name was agreed, ‘The Lord Nash Department of Art and Architecture’ and informal nickname, ‘The Nash’ (both pseudonyms). The ‘Lord Nash’ and the nickname both came from the A&D faculty name. The allocation of roles within the

merged organisation took place through a formal organisational restructure initiated by the Dean. Job descriptions were prepared and people at the relevant management grades (Academic Leader to Associate Dean) were invited to apply for positions in the team. The new senior team consisted of the Dean, Deputy Dean, Project Office Head (all from Architecture) and Business Manager, Marketing & Recruitment Head and Technical Head (from Art & Design). Also, School Heads for Art, Design and Architecture, who each had an additional cross faculty role such as quality, research or learning & teaching, and two Deputy School heads (for the larger schools – Design & Architecture). These School posts all went to candidates from the existing faculty where the subject resided with the exception of the Head of Art post. The Deputy Dean took on this role in the interim until an external appointee arrived at the end of 2012. Two senior figures in the A&D team, the Head of Fine Arts and Associate Dean Academic, were not appointed, and both left the organisation shortly after.

Access was granted to the organisation in October 2011. The main activity during the period from the retirement of the Art & Design Dean in October 2010 until the summer of 2011 involved the conjoint Dean undertaking a review of the Art & Design faculty and presenting a merger plan to the Executive Board for approval. I first met with the Vice Chancellor in July 2011 and the conjoint Dean in August 2011. By the time a second meeting took place with the Dean in September 2011, the financial approval for the merger plans had just received full sign off by the Board. It was possible, at this point, to trace the main activities up to September 2011 through documents and interviews, and to identify the key timeline and initiatives that would deliver the change over the next two years. This included a ‘harmonisation year’ where the two faculties worked alongside each other until August 2012. In August 2012 the merger became formalised. Significant change impacting academic staff and students began in the academic year of October 2012 to July 2013. This included co-location in a newly refurbished building and changes to establish a common curriculum and common pedagogic practices, and then ongoing but less significant change continued thereafter. The research project tracked the change implementation in real-time from October 2011 to September 2013. However, data collection in terms of the start of the merger process went back to October 2010.

### 3.5 Research Design

Langley (1999) observes that qualitative researchers often struggle to isolate units of analysis in a clear way. For this research, the two academic faculties involved in the merger provided a logical and physical boundary, as both operated as discrete organisational units from their own stand-alone buildings. The deliberateness of the Dean's plans helped in providing relatively clear boundaries for the research. Early discussion with the Dean helped to define the scope of the change including a timeline and key initiatives. However, as noted in Chapter 2, it became apparent early on that the merger was one change with a number of sub-strands rather than a distinct series of initiatives. In light of this, the research design was based on a broad research question and on collecting data that would enable analysis from a range of different theoretical perspectives, such as sensemaking and identity. The more detailed research questions in the three main findings chapters were formulated and refined over time.

Pettigrew (1990:271) argues that 'truth is the daughter of time' and indeed, deciding the length of the study was more difficult than defining the scope and breadth. Pettigrew (1990) notes the difficulty in defining a start and end point for data collection in process research, particularly when studying an ongoing process rather than a one-off event. For this study, the plan initially was to observe an academic year from the start of term in October to the end of term in June. This is a traditional period of time in a university context, in keeping with Pettigrew's (1990) observation that time cycles are socially constructed and provide the 'implicit rhythm' of different social systems. However, it quickly became apparent that important phases of the change, such as the implementation of a common curriculum and studio system would be happening in the subsequent year, and that the summer recess of July to September was an important period of planning-for and reflection-on the change process by the research participants. As a result, real-time data collection was extended and began at the start of an academic year and continued for two calendar years (October 2011 to September 2013). This provided a logical start and end point and a sufficient period of change and continuity to robustly address the broad research question (Pettigrew 1990).

In terms of what data to collect, I was mindful of both process and SAP perspectives and particularly the need to capture cycles of action and interpretation consistent with sensemaking research. From a practice perspective Balogun et al. (2003) note the need to track the detail of the change and to build an understanding of the nature of events from different perspectives, and how those perceptions change over time. Langley (2007:274) refers to a process of 'following forward' where researchers follow the ramifications of an event such as a restructuring. Consistent with Langley and Abdallah (2012) data were collected from observations such as meetings, events and conversations; reflections and interpretations from interviews, and artefacts such as meeting minutes, PowerPoint presentations and reports in order to track change, and people's interpretations of change, over time. Drawing on Gioia et al. (2013) I also made extensive notes and recordings of what informants said and did in order to understand their lived experience.

SAP research captures breadth as well as depth (Balogun et al. 2003). This includes engagement with, not just senior management and their plans, but with people within the organisation who are translating those plans in to every day practices that deliver the strategic change (Balogun et al. 2003). Similarly Pettigrew (1990) acknowledges that participants often have contradictory accounts and thus it is important to gain a pluralistic perspective from a range of actors with different interests and opinions. Johnson et al. (2007) recommend data collection methods that embrace plurality in terms of different levels of analysis, the range of research participants, and the theoretical perspective adopted. For this research, this was achieved through interviews that were conducted with the Dean and the Faculty Management Group (FMG) team but also with people reporting to them, for example academic course leaders.

Miles et al. (2013) also warn against sampling too narrowly and encourage researchers to interview participants on the boundary of the change or in neighbouring areas to gain additional insight. For this research, stakeholders within the university but outside the faculty, such as the Vice Chancellor, Finance Director and the Deans of the other faculties were interviewed. This breadth and depth of

data collection was also in keeping with the broad research question and theoretical perspectives which were still emergent and tentative. The site selection criteria had been broad, reflecting the difficulty in obtaining access for intensive longitudinal qualitative research and the need for flexibility and 'planned opportunism' (Pettigrew 1990), so there was uncertainty at the start about what would emerge. The aim here was to collect data that would enable later analysis from a range of theoretical perspectives. This approach differs from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) where theory generation takes place during data collection and determines what data is collected next through a process of theoretical sampling. I wrote down thoughts and engaged in discussions with the supervisor about emerging themes but this did not significantly change the course of data collection.

As is typical for qualitative studies, the sampling was purposive and initial decisions about what to observe evolved as new information came to light through the process of data collection (Miles et al. 2013). New data directed my attention towards new activities or events or documents or new participants. An initial interview with the Dean, in September 2011, identified the importance of the FMG meetings for managing the strategic change process. The interview with the Dean also identified key activities and people involved in the process. Following this interview, a tentative data collection plan was developed which included observation of meetings and events, interviews (both formal and informal) with key people and document collection. Following Balogun et al. (2003), the initial plan also included diaries and shadowing. After a number of attempts to gain diarists and shadowing opportunities, I concluded these methods were problematic in this particular context because people felt they were too busy and they felt that shadowing was too intrusive. I was also wary of spooking participants such that access was withdrawn entirely.

## 3.6 Data Collection

Table 3.1 below provides a summary of the key data collected.

### Table 3-1 Data Inventory

**Observation Data**

| Meeting Type | Data collection period | Frequency | Total Hours Obsv. (approx) | Total No. | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FMG Meetings | Oct '11 to Sep 2013 | Fortnightly | 100 | 51 | Observe interaction between senior & middle managers |
| Faculty Rep and School Meetings | June '12 to July 2013 | Fortnightly | 36 | 22 | Observe interaction between middle and front line managers |
| Other meetings | Oct '11 to July 2013 | Ad hoc | 30 | 42 | Observe faculty wide interaction |
| Events e.g. exhibitions | Feb '12 to June 2013 | Ad hoc | 20 | 17 | Observe interaction and capture reflections about the changes from FMG and front line managers |
| Total observation: | | | 186 | 132 | |

**Interview Data**

| Type of Role | Data Collection Period | No. of different people | Total No. Interviews | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Faculty Dean | Oct 2011 to Jul 2013 | 1 | 10 | Capture a range of reflections and different interpretations on the change |
| FMG member* | Nov 2011 to Aug 2013 | 19 | 47 | |
| FMG Direct Reports | Feb 2012 to Aug 2013 | 22 | 22 | |
| University Vice Chancellor | Oct 2011 to Jul 2013 | 1 | 5 | |
| Deputy VC or Deputy CEO | Mar 2012 to Aug 2013 | 2 | 6 | |
| Other university role e.g. Dean of different faculty | May 2012 to July 2013 | 7 | 8 | |
| Total number: | | 52 | 98 | |

*includes people who left FMG and new appointees

**Documentary data**

| Documents | Time Period | No. of Items (approx) | Total Pages (est.) | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Key documents relating to period before real-time data collection:** News articles, University Board Minutes, documents relating to the merger, Faculty newsletters | 2001 to 2011 | 160 | 1300 | Understand change context leading up to real time data collection |
| **Key documents relating to real-time data collection period:** e.g. meeting minutes, board packs, reports, presentations, press coverage, web site pages | Oct 2010 to Sep 2013 | 875 | 2930 | Record of factual data such as Minutes; artefacts used to inform or persuade e.g. reports, slides, posters; evidence of material changes e.g. to buildings, web sites |
| Photographs e.g. of building changes, posters and signage, Twitter screen shots | | 250 | 250 | |
| Total documents: | | 1285 | 4480 | |

### *3.6.1 Meeting Observation*

SAP research points to the relevance of meetings to the strategy process, particularly in a university context where so much happens through meetings and committees (Hendry and Seidl 2003; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Kwon et al. 2014). The main meeting observed was the Faculty Management Group meeting. These initially took place weekly with a meeting for the Art & Design faculty management team one week, and a similar meeting for Architecture the next, both chaired by the Dean. Every six weeks, beginning October 2011, the meeting was replaced by a joint meeting of both faculty groups. In May 2012 after a single faculty management team was appointed, this cycle was replaced with a meeting every two weeks for the newly merged FMG team. The meetings took place on Wednesday afternoons and usually lasted about two hours and fifteen minutes. I began attending these meetings in October 2011 and was present at the first joint faculty meeting between Art & Design and Architecture. Each meeting had a secretary who produced minutes and an agenda and additionally other documentation such as status reports or presentations were circulated either electronically before the meeting or on paper at the meeting. All the minutes and documents were collected. In addition the meetings were audio recorded and extensive field notes taken. I attended the meetings as a non-participant observer but was seated at the meeting table and included in emails circulated prior to and after the meeting. Between October 2011 and September 2013 51 FMG meetings were observed in this way. I attended all FMG meetings over the two years, only missing three due to other commitments. The audio recorded length of the shortest meeting was 41 minutes, the longest was 220 minutes, and the average was 122 minutes. The shortest meeting transcript was 6367 words, the longest 32,890 words and the average 18,619 words.

In addition, 22 meetings were observed that took place regularly, usually once a fortnight on the Wednesday that FMG was not taking place, and were chaired by members of FMG. These included School meetings and meetings with cross faculty representation such as a cross faculty Marketing group. These meetings were observed and recorded in a similar way to the FMG meeting. However, I did not systematically attend all of them but attended on a more occasional basis to gain a sense of how the different meetings operated, the content of the meetings, and to

observe FMG members in a different setting from the usual fortnightly meeting. Similarly, 42 meetings were observed that were more ad-hoc in nature and were either chaired by the Dean or run at the Dean's request. These included a short series of planning meetings for the Summer Exhibition, a series of Finance and HR training meetings for FMG, and a meeting to discuss possible course closures. Some of these ad-hoc meetings followed or preceded the FMG meeting and again they were audio recorded, detailed field notes taken and documents collected. Observation of meetings proved to be a useful data collection method because it did not take up participants' time or require a high level of individual trust. It also enabled observation of real-time participant interaction, breadth and depth of understanding of the research context and changes over time, and the ability to take notes and listen without the need to interact.

### *3.6.2 Individual Formal and Informal Interviews*

From a social construction perspective, Gioia et al. (2013) argue that participants are 'knowledgeable agents' who understand what they are trying to achieve and can talk about their actions and intentions. Pettigrew (1990) suggests that interviews can help to get behind the 'what' and 'when' of observable events and to understand the 'why' and 'how'. In practice, most interviews were set up in a similar way. The participant was invited to be interviewed, usually informally and face-to-face, for example, at the end of a meeting. There was no formal mandate, for example from the Dean, requiring people to agree to an interview. However, the informal request was followed up with an email to arrange a meeting time. The email made clear that the research was sanctioned by the Vice Chancellor and directed participants to an attachment which contained an overview of the research project, the nature of the interview and an ethics consent form. The meetings were usually held in the participant's office or a small private meeting room. All participants agreed to audio recording of the meeting, which was later transcribed in full, and I also took field notes. These were not as detailed as the field notes for meetings due to the difficulty of thinking, listening, speaking, making eye contact and writing, at the same time. However, the notes were updated immediately after the meeting with my thoughts and reflections.

Over the two years, 98 interviews were conducted. The meetings were scheduled for

an hour and on average they lasted an hour (the average audio recording length was 58 minutes). Some participants were happy for the meeting to overrun with the longest meeting lasting 95 minutes. The three shortest meetings were 28, 29 and 31 minutes respectively, as they were the three final interviews at the end of the project with the Executive Deputy Vice Chancellor, Deputy CEO and Finance Director, who had been interviewed previously and who did not have a great deal more to add. The average transcription length was 9278 words. The shortest was 4708 words (the 29 minute interview) and the longest 17,461 words (the 95 minute interview). 57 interviews were with FMG members, including the Dean (10 interviews) and other members were interviewed between one and five times over two years. 22 interviews were with people who were line managed by FMG members. These were predominantly academic course leaders. People at this level were generally interviewed only once formally, in order to get a wide range of opinions from different parts of the two faculties. However, they were also interviewed informally through brief conversations at lower level meetings and at events over the two years and this was captured as field notes. Informal conversations also took place with FMG members, often before and after meetings, and this was not audio-recorded but was captured as field notes. 19 interviews were conducted with people outside the faculty. 18 of these were at the same level or senior to the Dean, for example, the Vice Chancellor or the other faculty Deans, and over half (11 out of 19) were with the Vice Chancellor (5) or Deputy Vice Chancellor (3) and Deputy CEO (3). This was to capture the university level context of the change, the interaction between the faculty and the executive level, and a variety of perspectives on the change from outside the faculty. At FMG level and outside the faculty level, little difficulty was experienced in gaining agreement to be interviewed. However, the timing was difficult as people were very busy and on numerous occasions interviews were rescheduled but eventually took place. At the level of people line managed by FMG, a number of people were invited that I had only met once or not at all, and who had no existing knowledge of the research. There was never outright refusal, but a small number of people simply did not reply to the email request. Given the size of the pool of people at the level below FMG, people were chased once by email and if they still did not reply then an alternative person was contacted.

Yin (2013) describes case study interviews as guided conversations that are fluid,

albeit with a consistent line of inquiry put forth in a non-threatening way. In this research, interviews were unstructured (Lincoln and Guba 1985) reflecting a desire for depth over focus, and to encourage the participant to determine what was particularly relevant or significant about the change process from his or her perspective. In keeping with unstructured interviews, there were a series of prompts around particular topic areas. If the interview was a first meeting, irrespective of the participant, the interview began by briefly outlining the purpose of the study and asking the participant to speak about their background in relation to the university, typically, “How long have you worked here and how did you end up in your current role?”. Having captured data, in as much detail as people wanted to go in to, about their history and recent experiences at the university, the interview moved on to their experience of the merger. Typically, this began with, “do you remember when you first heard about the merger?”. The participant was then encouraged to step through significant memories from first hearing the news until the current day with generic prompts such as, “...and what happened after that” or “and what did you think of that?”. Having arrived at recent events, the format for the remainder of the interview, and for subsequent interviews if it was not a first interview, was to discuss recent events. This was typically through questions such as, “what has happened since we last spoke?” and “what are the recent gone wells and not gone wells?”. For people outside the faculty, this might include, “what do you think of the merger between Art & Design and Architecture, what do you think has gone well or not gone well?”. Whilst largely relying on the participant to identify critical incidents and their thoughts and feelings about them, I also had a list of initiatives and recent events that could be used to jog memories and elicit further thoughts, for example, “and what about the summer exhibition last week, do you think that has gone well or not gone well?”. This list was updated before every interview to reflect recent events and to tailor it for the particular person, for example, depending on whether they were an Architecture course leader or Art & Design course leader. The interviews were typically concluded by asking if the participant had anything further that they wanted to add or to ask, thanking them for their time and seeking permission to contact them again if needed.

### *3.6.3 Documents and Material Artefacts*

A range of artefacts were collected over the two years. The majority of documents are from the 98 meetings observed, for example, agendas, minutes and individual

reports and presentations from meeting attendees. From events, such as exhibitions, there are photos, for example of exhibitions spaces. There are also posters advertising the exhibitions and exhibition catalogues and promotional material. More generally, there are photos of changes to the building and of the newly refurbished spaces and new logo and signage. There are also copies of news articles about the faculty and newsletters published by the Dean. Electronic document sources include copies of emails, primarily between the Dean and FMG and screenshots of the new website. There are formal reports such as the Architecture faculty's submission to RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) for revalidation of their courses. Most documents are from the two years of real-time study. However, key documents relating to the planning phase of the merger, from October 2010 to the formal start of the research in October 2011, such as the Dean's presentation to the Board, were collected and early email correspondence between the Dean and the Vice Chancellor about the merger. The data also includes a small number of older documents which were available through the university's intranet such as annual Architecture newsletters for every year from 2005 to 2011, the RIBA submission from 5 years before the most recent one, information from the previous REF (Research Excellence Framework). These were collected to compare what people said about the faculties during interviews and to compare the old faculties with the new. The documents help to fill important gaps in the interview and meeting data. For example, the minutes of meetings I did not attend as well as events that occurred before the research formally commenced. The artefacts also helped as an aide-memoire and supporting evidence for the interview and meeting data, for example, there was discussion at the start of term about the lack of basic teaching equipment and the photos evidence this. A number of participants also talk about the quality of the new website and the screenshots help to support this claim.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Whilst data collection was similar for the research questions explored in the three main chapters of this thesis, data analysis differed. In this section, the overall approach is outlined. However, further detail is also available in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Qualitative data analysis is frequently viewed as challenging. Yin (2013) argues that

analysis is the most difficult stage of case study work. More vividly, Pettigrew (1990:281) speaks of ‘death by data asphyxiation’ where data has become a ‘clinging mass of maple syrup’, and Langley (1999:694) refers to ‘shapeless data spaghetti’. For Langley (1999) the key challenge is to develop theoretical insight and understanding that is potentially useful to others, without losing the dynamism and richness of complex and eclectic data.

The first step in data analysis was to organise the data. Langley (1999) refers to narrative as an organising strategy which helps to present the data in a systematic form, avoids excessive data reduction and attempts to capture differing viewpoints from the case. She suggests that it can be a preliminary step, intended for the researcher’s own use rather than an end product (Langley 1999). For this research, a detailed story, or ethnographic account (Van Maanen 2011), of the change was constructed using the raw data. Following Langley (1999), a process of ‘temporal bracketing’ was applied to create comparable time periods. The two years of data were written as a story of eight, three-month quarters with a summary at the end of each quarter. This fitted with the pattern of the academic year and made it easier to compare events, for example at the start of academic year one with academic year two. Both Miles et al. (2013) and Pettigrew (1990) recommend the use of data reduction and data display techniques to organise the data. For this research, tables were created using Excel to display key events and to summarise the data collected. These summaries were for my own benefit and helped in the detection of patterns, trends and differences (Miles et al. 2013). The data itself was also systematised and organised by uploading it to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software tool (QDAS) which facilitates the storage and management of different types of qualitative data (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). Bazely and Jackson (2013) argue that qualitative software provides researchers with sufficient closeness to the data for nuance and granularity, whilst also facilitating distance for synthesis and abstraction, and an ability to easily switch between the two.

During the two year data collection period, I constantly looked for patterns and themes emerging inductively from the empirical data. There was regular communication between researcher and supervisor, in writing and verbally, about what was surprising and interesting in the data, a process of abduction, and I

continued to read the theoretical and empirical literature in more depth around areas that seemed particularly promising, a process of deduction. These cycles continued over time and by the end of the organising phase were focussed around three areas; sensemaking and meetings, organisational identity change and sensemaking, and identity work during organisational identity change. I began to develop more focussed narratives, for example to focus on the story of the meetings for chapter 5 and the organisational identity change for chapter 6. The next phase of data analysis began with the meetings paper, chapter 5.

Langley and Abdallah (2012) identify two main approaches to analyse process data: the 'Eisenhardt method' and the 'Gioia method'. The Eisenhardt method is regarded as the more positivist of the two and is based on multiple cases of between 4 and 10 whilst the Gioia method is an interpretive approach based on single site cases (Langley and Abdallah 2012). The Gioia method, if not quite a 'boilerplate' (Pratt 2009), is regarded as a successful methodological approach that has resulted in the publication of single site research in a range of top journals, and in particular, Corley and Gioia's 2004 paper received the ASQ Scholarly Contribution Award for the most significant paper published in the preceding five years (Langley and Abdallah 2012). The Gioia method draws on grounded theory (Gioia et al. 2013; Glaser and Strauss 1967), and, as explained earlier in the data collection section, my research differs from grounded theory in using purposive sampling rather than theoretical sampling. Also, in grounded theory and the Gioia method, existing theories are not reviewed until after initial data analysis in order to reduce confirmation bias (Gioia et al. 2013). In contrast, my research began with a review of the literature which identified a number of areas of theoretical and empirical interest.

For chapter 5, the meetings paper and subsequently for chapter 6, the organisational identity paper, I drew on the Gioia method for coding the data and presenting the findings. Consistent with Gioia et al. (2013) a first order analysis was conducted where the data were coded in a way that was faithful to the informant's voice. Coding or codifying is defined as, "to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorise" (Saldana 2013). In this research, the facility offered by the NVivo software was used to code the data. Coding is not generated automatically but relies on the researcher to go through the

data and select relevant items and assign a code, which is called a ‘node’ in NVivo (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). The main benefit was in being able to maintain a list of codes and to easily add new quotes to an existing node or to group similar nodes together. Gioia et al. (2013) recommend using the participants actual words to generate codes or categories. It is possible using NVivo to capture exact words using the ‘In Vivo’ coding option to generate new nodes (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). However, Langley (2007) suggests that the use of gerunds, where nouns are turned into verbs, for example, champion to championing, can help to focus attention on the dynamic nature of data. This also focuses attention on what people do and is very much in keeping with a practice perspective (Langley 2007). Miles et al. (2013) also suggest gerunds for ‘process coding’ of action in data and for coding of participant interaction. Having tried both, I found it was more difficult to identify patterns between the ‘In Vivo’ codes than the gerunds, and therefore the gerund approach was adopted. Consistent with Gioia et al. (2013) coding continued until there was sufficient data to confirm that each node was valid and until no new categories emerged.

The process of second order analysis involves looking for similarities and differences between the first order categories, grouping similar categories together and moving from the participant data to a smaller number of more abstract, theoretical concepts (Gioia et al. 2013). This process draws on grounded theory and is similar to Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) term ‘axial coding’. The researcher attempts to identify abstract concepts that describe and explain what is happening, and to do so with an awareness of existing literature to understand if the concepts are new or have precedents (Gioia et al. 2013). Once a set of second order concepts are established then, ‘aggregate dimensions’ (Gioia et al. 2013) are generated which capture overarching concepts that link the second-order concepts. In Gioia et al. (2013) the process is described in a linear way and, once there is a complete set of second-order concepts and aggregate themes, a data structure is generated, which is a visual representation of the data and concepts, and subsequently a process model is developed which shows the dynamic interrelationships between the data rather than the static data structure (Gioia et al. 2013). In this research, a similar process was followed but second-order concepts, aggregate dimensions, data structure and process model were produced through a less linear and more iterative cycle of trial

and error and discussion between researcher and supervisor. This involved revisiting the literature to identify what was interesting in comparison to prior research, drawing and redrawing process model diagrams, re-drafting data structures, restructuring and re-labelling second order-codes and aggregate dimensions. This process continued until something emerged that best addressed the research question, that best combined the qualities of good theory identified by Langley (2007) in terms of accuracy (close to the original data), simplicity (parsimony) and generality (broad application), and that could not knowingly be improved upon. This was then written up as an academic paper using many of the rhetorical conventions that have been established as the 'Gioia method' and discussed in Langley and Abdallah (2012). In particular the Findings section draws on the Gioia method, and presents "an informative story that is driving toward some new concept development and theoretical discovery with the careful presentation of evidence" (Gioia et al. 2013:23). The Findings include key quotes, sometimes known as 'power quotes' (Pratt 2008), in the main narrative to help to tell the story and a table with 'proof' quotes that provides evidence to support the data categories.

For chapter 7, the identity work paper, a more narrative based (Langley 1999) and abductive approach (Cunliffe 2011; Gioia et al. 2013; Klag and Langley 2013; Welch et al. 2013) was adopted to the data analysis. Cycling between the data and the literature I noticed two interesting and surprising differences which I decided to investigate. Firstly, non-discursive practices seemed to be particularly important in stimulating identity work and secondly, individuals seemed to emerge from the change process with an enhanced self-identity, despite painful identity struggles. To explore this I developed detailed narratives for a sample of ten individuals and then, seeing similarities between them, I developed a composite narrative (Dunford and Jones 2000; Sonenshein 2010; Vaara and Tienari 2011) for the five academics in the sample and the five academic managers that documented patterns in their identity construction experiences over time. I used tables in Microsoft Word and Excel to develop 'second order' concepts and 'aggregate dimensions' and the narrative evidence to support them was similar to a 'first order analysis' (Gioia et al. 2013). A formal 'data structure' (Gioia et al. 2013) seemed superfluous for this paper, given the more narrative based and abductive approach. However, the analysis is presented in a similar way to the 'Gioia method' with a summary process model, an

informative story structured around the second order concepts and aggregate dimensions, plus power quotes and tables of supporting quotes (Langley and Abdallah 2012).

## 3.8 Research Issues

A challenge that interpretive and qualitative researchers often face is the accusation that their research lacks rigour (Yanow 2006). For Yanow (2006), this suggests that the research is unplanned, unsystematic and chaotic whilst, in fact, interpretive research simply has its own forms of planning and procedures, its own means of deriving order from chaos, such as rich descriptive narratives, and it own systematic approaches that differ from the scientific method. Case study research frequently draws on Yin (2013) who employs terms such as 'validity' and 'reliability' that are associated with scientific measures of rigour and objectivity. However, in keeping with an interpretive and naturalistic perspective, I follow the Gioia method in adopting Lincoln and Guba's (1985) measures of trustworthiness (Gioia et al. 2013; Langley and Abdallah 2012) and also much other qualitative research (for example, Balogun et al. 2011; Balogun and Johnson 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that naturalistic research needs to address issues of trustworthiness which include issues of credibility (getting close enough to the phenomena), transferability (wider generalisability and applicability), dependability (reliability and consistency) and confirmability (neutrality, objectivity, lack of bias).

### *3.8.1 Credibility Issues*

Credibility concerns activities that help to produce findings and interpretations that are believable (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Consistent with Lincoln and Guba (1985), my deep and lengthy immersion in the site through 'prolonged engagement' over two years, and extensive time spent with participants, provides evidence of understanding of the research context, and addresses the issue of credibility. Prolonged engagement also enables researchers to build trust and rapport which increases the likelihood that participants will speak openly and honestly about their experiences (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Triangulation (Denzin 1978) involves the use of a multiplicity of approaches, for example multiple data sources, theoretical standpoints or research methods as a form of verification that builds credibility. Here, the range of different data sources, such as interviews, observation and documents

further substantiates the claim that the research is credible. Pettigrew (1990) suggests that triangulation draws on the strengths of different data collection methods, for example, interviews help to understand the thoughts and feelings of individuals whilst meeting observation focuses on what people say and do as they interact together.

'Member checking' is another approach where credibility is established by sharing findings, categories or conclusions with the participants and providing the opportunity for them to respond (Lincoln and Guba 1985). For this research, a more formal dialogue took place with the Dean early in the research, around the middle of the research period, in June 2012, and again at the end, to share emerging themes and observations and invite the Dean to respond. More informal, short conversations with a wider range of participants occurred throughout the research period, often after interviews or meetings, for example, where a participant would ask a question such as, "what do you think?" or "so how do you think it's going?". Here I was mindful of my role as observer rather than management consultant or advisor and was careful to respond with specific examples and evidence. Both informal and formal checks helped to summarise the data, a key step in the process of analysis, and to confirm the credibility of the data (Lincoln and Guba 1985)

### *3.8.2 Transferability Issues*

The research here contains rich description which facilitates empirical transferability as well as emergent abstract concepts that facilitate theoretical transferability. Whilst scientific research is expected to make specific statements about external validity, such as statistical confidence limits, the naturalist can only set out a working hypothesis and be clear about the context so that transferability can be judged based on the degree of similarity and difference between this setting and another (Lincoln and Guba 1985). For this research, transferability is based on the use of narrative and the depth of rich contextual detail, including supporting quotes, which enables comparison with another context (Langley and Abdallah 2012; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Whilst Lincoln and Guba (1985) focus on empirical transferability, Gioia et al. (2013) argue that their intent is to generalise to theory. In the same way that a good teaching case study exemplifies underlying principles that apply in a range of settings, so they argue do the abstract concepts that emerge during data analysis

using the Gioia method (Gioia et al. 2013). Consistent with Gioia et al (2013), the research here identifies abstract concepts that can be applied to other settings and identifies similarities between these emerging concepts and other studies. For example, in Chapter 6 I identify other process models of deliberate identity change, such as Fiol (2002), that identity phases of generating new claims followed by developing new meanings.

### *3.8.3 Dependability Issues*

In science, dependability or reliability is closely linked to the idea of step-by-step replication where one person could follow the same steps and would replicate a similar result (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985:317) note that for interpretive research no two contexts are the same and, even in the same setting, it is likely that researchers will pursue differing lines of inquiry, thus "stepwise replication is a dubious procedure". A process suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is an inquiry audit, similar to an accounting audit, but in the case of research, another person takes on the role of confirming that the process of inquiry is robust and that the interpretations, findings and conclusions are coherent and supported by the data. For this research, this process was undertaken by the first and second supervisors who both have extensive research expertise. The first supervisor in particular had prolonged and close communication over time about the progress and practices adopted throughout the research.

### *3.8.4 Confirmability Issues*

Confirmability concerns steps taken to show that the findings are not unduly influenced by the biases and motivations of the researcher (Lincoln and Guba 1985). From a traditional perspective, there is a stronger sense that it is possible for the researcher to remain 'neutral' and not to disturb the research setting, for example, by maintaining an adequate distance between researcher and participants (Lincoln and Guba 1985). From a naturalistic perspective 'prolonged engagement' in the research site is valued and seen as a means of enhancing credibility by building rapport (Lincoln and Guba 1985). However, Gioia et al. (2013) note that it can also lead to the researcher 'going native', aligning too closely with the participants view and losing the more distant perspective needed for abstract theorising. In this research, regular written and oral communication between the primary researcher, who was

immersed in the site, and the supervisor, who had no direct contact, helped to maintain objectivity and reduce 'researcher effects' (Miles et al. 2013). Consistent with Miles et al. (2013) participant bias was also reduced through the breadth of participants interviewed and the breadth of data collected which ensured 'representativeness' of different views and the development of a complete picture. Collection of different types of data sources, through triangulation, also helped to overcome any weaknesses inherent in a single type that might have resulted in a biased or incomplete view (Miles et al. 2013; Pettigrew 1990). For example, meeting observation captured interactive dialogue but failed to capture the participants' thoughts and reflections on the interactions.

Gioia et al. (2013) argue that in order to reduce prior hypothesis confirmation bias, existing theories should not be reviewed until after initial data analysis. However, the research here follows Klag and Langley (2013:151) who suggest that this stance underplays the role of existing theory and imagination; in fact prior knowledge can help the researcher to make 'conceptual leaps' where new theoretical ideas are both "embedded in observations and informed by ambient ideas". Consistent with Lincoln and Guba (1985) the quality of the data was also ensured through rigorous, systematic and timely record keeping, for example, storing and backing up raw data electronically where possible, capturing detailed field notes and keeping the developing versions of data analysis, such as the emergent data structure and process model to capture the development of ideas over time. I also maintained a reflexive diary, progress log and plan of next steps.

### *3.8.5 Ethical Issues*

This research acknowledges the increasing influence and use of regulatory codes of practice, such as the Framework for Research Ethics (ESRC 2015), which includes a focus on ethics throughout the research lifecycle. Ethical issues are often difficult to predict and situated in a particular context that makes it difficult to develop rules to cover every eventuality (Cohen et al. 2007). As a general principal I sought to act responsibly in all dealings and to consider the interests of the research community, the participants and the end audience. Specific practices included developing a formal research agreement which afforded the site and participants anonymity, making participants aware that participation was voluntary and on the basis of

informed consent (ESRC 2015), and storing the data on a PC in a safe location where the risk of theft or accidental loss was low.

### 3.9 Conclusions

This chapter has described the overall research agenda and the rationale for the choices made. The research focuses on the doing of strategy work over time; an area where existing SAP researchers have established the benefits of interpretive, qualitative studies. Given that existing research from the literature review reveals that we know something about this topic, but there are still knowledge gaps, an exploratory and inductive approach was adopted that builds theory through elaboration. There was significant support for the selection of a real-time, longitudinal, single site case study from existing and similar studies that are increasingly accepted in the highest ranking academic journals. The data collection plan and the choice of meeting observations, interviews and documents, were linked to existing good practice in process and SAP research. In particular, the need to gather breadth of data from a range of different collection methods, in order to capture action as well as reflection on action, and from a range of participants in order to capture different views and a complete picture. Data analysis is outlined in more depth in each of the three main chapters 5, 6 and 7, but here the focus was particularly on similarities and differences with the 'Gioia method' which is a widely adopted approach to single site case analysis and the use of NVivo to facilitate movement between distance for theorising and closeness for nuance and data granularity. When considering research issues, it was argued that measures of quality should be based on issues that are appropriate to interpretive research, such as Lincoln and Guba's (1985) measures of trustworthiness, rather than adaptation of scientific measures. Justification was provided for the overall research agenda by demonstrating that the research addressed issues of credibility, for example through prolonged and deep engagement with the research site; transferability, through both empirical richness and the development of abstract theoretical concepts; dependability, through an ongoing process of supervisory audit and communication, and confirmability, for example through the breadth of different participants interviewed and the range of different types of data sources.

# Chapter 4: Overview of Case Study Context

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of how the change developed chronologically, the peaks and troughs as events unfolded over time, as well as a background introduction to the university itself and the two merging faculties. Its aim is to provide a holistic introduction and overview that complements the more specific accounts detailed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 that relate to particular aspects of the change process, such as meetings in chapter 5. Table 4-1 below provides a high level summary of key events.

**Table 4-1 Timeline of Key Dates**

| Timeline of Key Dates | |
|---|---|
| Pre October (Yr 0) | January - Dean three month consultation review begins<br>March - Preliminary findings presented to Board<br>June - Formal Board approval<br>*August - first meeting between researcher and Dean**<br>Curriculum changes prepared for validation<br>Live Shared Project brief seeking expressions of interest |
| October<br>(start of Academic Year 1) | *Research period commences*<br>'Harmonisation year' before formal merger August Yr1<br>First joint FMG meeting |
| March Yr1 | Management Restructure<br>New FMG co-located<br>New meetings structure |
| March Yr1 | New faculty name agreed |
| June Yr1 | End of year Summer Exhibitions<br>Works begins on Estates refurbishment |
| August Yr1 | Official launch date for newly merged faculty<br>Launch of new website |
| September Yr1 | Preparation for start of new academic year |
| October<br>(start of Academic Year 2) | Start of term<br>• Art & Design in refurbished location<br>• Start of Art & Design new shared curriculum and studio system |
| November Yr2 | Post Graduate Architecture students move to Art & Design building |
| May Yr2 | Cross faculty second marking and moderating |
| June Yr2 | End of year Summer Exhibitions<br>Phase 2 Estates refurbishment begins<br>Period of reflection and planning for next academic year |
| September Yr2 | *End of research period*<br>Architecture Undergraduates imminent move into Art & Design building… |

*italics denote dates linked to the research itself rather than the organisation

### 4.2 University context

Unik (pseudonym) is a large UK higher education establishment that became a university in 1992 when the UK government granted university status to former polytechnic colleges. In early 2009, the Board of Governors was informed by its legal advisors that the university's cash position was weak and that steps needed to be taken to avoid the university becoming insolvent by 2011/12. The poor cash position was linked to mismanagement, as well as increased market competition, and the incumbent Vice Chancellor retired. In autumn 2009 a new Vice Chancellor was appointed. The new Vice Chancellor emphasised the historic focus of the university, dating back to the mid-1800's, in offering education to a wide range of students from diverse backgrounds;

> *"Of course it fits in with [Unik's] role to a tee in that we've always been seen there to be building opportunity for those who haven't necessarily had every opportunity in life". (Vice Chancellor)*

The strategy developed by the new VC shifted the university from a highly centralised model of control to a more distributed and collaborative approach aimed at delivering financial, managerial and academic reform. For example, 'facultisation' involved reducing the overall number of faculties to create larger units that could operate as quasi-autonomous profit centres with a transparent resource allocation model and reduced cost through eliminating duplication. The Dean, as leader of the faculty, would have more autonomy to tailor the faculty to suit the needs of their particular market, providing they did so within their allocated budget.

> *"The faculty dean, to my mind is the pivotal role in a university... And a small powerful well respected series of deans is what makes a university really function, whatever your vice chancellor is like, and in fact whatever some of your rank and file staff and students may be." (Vice Chancellor)*

In autumn 2010 the Dean of the Art & Design faculty announced his retirement. In keeping with his strategy, the Vice Chancellor formally announced in late November 2010 that the Dean of Architecture would be the new conjoint Dean of both faculties.

### 4.3 Faculty context (Architecture)

In the late 1980's the Architecture school (pseudonym) operated a traditional polytechnic model in line with the rest of the university;

> *"lots of boys from [local] County Council doing their training...very solid, not very imaginative, not known as a design school". (Architecture manager)*

In the early 1990's the school underwent a radical transformation over a relatively short period of time. The Head of School had studied and taught at top UK institutions such as the Architectural Association (AA) and Royal College of Art (RCA) and adopted the strategy of becoming a 'top notch design school'. This included recruiting new staff, entering competitions and creating studios – a model used by top design schools which provided students with an experience of learning which more closely reflected the real-world. In the mid-90's the school was re-housed in its own purpose-built accommodation, about 5 minutes walk from the main university. This underlined the sense of an independent unit, distinct from the rest of the university. By 2000, when the Head of School stepped down, the reputation had grown substantially and it was possible to attract a new Head of School who had strong associations with the AA and was both sympathetic to the existing strategy and able to take it forward. By 2010, the school had spread to a second building and was out performing the rest of the university on numerous measures such as external reputation, league table results, student satisfaction and the ability to recruit students with top grades.

> *"If [Unik] has an ivory tower academically it's [Architecture] and that's where we get the best students...it's not a big area but it's got a good reputation." (Executive Level Board Member)*

The school was re-titled as a 'faculty' by the new Vice Chancellor in 2010. Whilst the Architecture faculty's reputation had grown considerably over more than 20 years, it was still a small part of a much larger and broader institution that was poorly ranked in many league tables. The conjoining of the Art & Design and Architecture faculties under one Dean, and the proposal of a merger between them was initially viewed by many people in Architecture as a threat. It was thought that the merger could dilute the faculty's identity and reputation and its ability to operate as a distinct unit, physically separate and substantially different to the main institution.

### 4.4 Faculty context (Art & Design)

The Art & Design faculty (pseudonym) was based in two buildings which were close to each other and about a 20-30 minute commute from the Architecture faculty. The faculty consisted of a wide range of different disciplines including textiles, graphics, fine art, film and media, musical instrument making, furniture making and restoration, jewellery making, plastics, interior design and product design. It was a disparate mix

that had been added to over the years with the adoption of a furniture unit in the early 1990's and a synthetic materials unit in the mid 2000's. There were pockets of high performance but generally the faculty was ranked much lower in league tables than the Architecture faculty. The retiring Dean of the faculty had been in the role since 2006. The period from 2006 until the merger announcement in 2010 was characterised by a series of cost cutting and redundancy exercises. There were declining student numbers nationally in many craft fields and closures of departments at other universities. It was also known that higher tuition fees, which would be introduced nationally from September 2012, were likely to impact arts courses where, unlike Architecture, students could not expect high starting salaries once they graduated. However, the problems were exacerbated by the management style which was described as tough and uncommunicative with few meetings or opportunities for debate.

> *"When [the Dean] announced that he was leaving, nobody was entirely disappointed ... what's wrong with this faculty has been the style of management and leadership has been, well, irregular, weak… it was just negative, driven by cost, driven by austerity measures." (Art & Design Manager)*

The merger was initially viewed by Art & Design (A&D) as yet another round of cuts with the possibility that the faculty might even be closed down.

### 4.5 The merger approval process (January to September 2011)

The Vice Chancellor invited the Dean to undertake a three month review commencing in January 2011 and to submit his plans for the future of the two faculties to the Board for approval. For the three months the Dean carefully divided his time between A&D and Architecture and met with staff and students. He reinitiated and chaired a fortnightly management group meeting in A&D and on the alternate weeks he held a separate management meeting for Architecture. A university wide review of undergraduate provision was undertaken during this time and the Dean used it to reduce the number of courses in A&D and to move towards a course structure that was more closely aligned with the Architecture course structure. The merger plans were formally approved by the Board in June 2011. The plans included the closure of the two Architecture buildings and move of staff over to the A&D site, along with significant investment in upgrading the primary A&D building to create a more attractive and 'neighbourly' environment that would facilitate

interaction between people. The plan included the need to develop a shared identity and highlighted common underlying values shared by both faculties. There was significant curriculum change to bring A&D practices much more closely in line with Architecture, in particular, to be able to introduce a studio based course structure in A&D in September 2012 and a shared History and Theory module. This was seen as an effective way to develop a shared identity and to improve the performance of A&D through a teaching model that was more transparent and more consistent with creative arts disciplines. The plan included a year-long 'harmonisation period' from June 2011 until the formal start of the merger in August 2012 to allow time to put the changes in place.

**4.6 From October 2011 to September 2012 (Field work Year 1)**

At the start of the new academic year, the Dean amended the meeting structure. There was still an Architecture meeting one week and A&D the next, but every 6 weeks one meeting was replaced by a joint meeting of all the managers in both faculties. There were 22 people at the first meeting; 10 from Architecture and 12 from A&D. The meetings provided a key vehicle for communication and coordination between the Dean and the two teams. The field research for this study formally began in October 2011 with the first joint meeting. A number of key initiatives were underway and all appeared to be on schedule. This included planning for the estates changes and curriculum changes and a local live project that provided an opportunity for both faculties to work more closely. There was limited interaction across the two teams with the exception of the Dean and, to a lesser extent, the Head of Marketing and Recruitment, who was working across both faculties.

In January 2012 the Dean initiated a restructure of the senior management team. Job descriptions were developed for the posts in the single faculty management group (FMG) and people were asked to apply for roles by the beginning of March. When the successful appointees were announced surprise was expressed within A&D as two senior figures in the A&D team, the Head of Fine Arts and Associate Dean Academic, had not been appointed, and both left the organisation shortly after. The formal announcement of the new faculty management group (FMG) was made at the end of March. The new appointments included three School Heads for Art, Design and Architecture (who each had an additional cross faculty role such as

quality, research or learning & teaching), two deputy school heads (for the larger schools – Design & Architecture), and cross faculty roles including Deputy Dean, Business Manager, Project Office Head, Marketing & Recruitment Head and Technical Head. No suitable candidate was found for the Head of Art school post and the Deputy Dean took on the role in the interim until an external appointee arrived at the end of 2012. FMG also included the faculty's HR representative and Finance representative, who were part of central teams, the course leader for the faculty wide History and Theory module, and the Student Experience co-ordinator. By the end of March, the new Faculty name had also been agreed and a new website provider commissioned.

From April, for at least part of every week, FMG began to operate from a shared office space in a building adjoining the second of two A&D buildings. The FMG meetings became fortnightly and the Dean established a series of lower level school and cross-faculty meetings, chaired by members of FMG, which occurred in the week between the FMG meetings. This period was also an opportunity for the School Head and other FMG members to establish a visible leadership style, for example, through chairing meetings and, for the Heads of School, through giving out prizes at the shows and taking a lead role in the graduation ceremony. As soon as the end of term summer shows finished in June, the A&D building was handed over to the contractors for remodelling work to begin.

The Administration team was restructured in July 2012 and adopted a cross-faculty structure to support the new FMG structure. The official start of the merger was 1st August when the new website was launched. By the start of September there were some signs that initiatives were falling behind schedule. The estates change were over running by two to four weeks and rooms were missing vital furniture and equipment. In the week before term started, A&D students selected studios for the first time in a day-long, intensive process. The Dean and members of the Architecture team were on hand to support the A&D staff and to ensure everything went smoothly. At this point induction was going well and FMG presented a professional and united front.

### 4.7 From October 2012 to September 2013 (Field work Year 2)

In October 2012, the merger had a significant operational impact, particularly on students and staff in Art and Design. For A&D the new academic year meant significant changes to the curriculum and, for many, a move into the refurbished facilities. A&D moved into the refurbished floors in October and were severely hampered by operational 'snagging' issues due to the over run in estates work which resulted in a lack of basic facilities such as projectors, chairs and tables. There was pressure on FMG members in cross faculty operational roles to fix the issues, often coming from the School Heads. The Head of the Design School argued that the issues were affecting staff confidence in FMG and could undermine the long-term credibility of the management team. For Architecture, the main change was the move of postgraduate students in to the refurbished facilities in the primary A&D building. This was delayed from the start of the academic year to November due to delays in completing the refurbishment. When the Architecture students finally moved in the worst of the operational issues were over. There were a few initial signs of resistance to their arrival by the Art and Design students and grumbles that the Architecture students seemed to get preferential treatment but this did not escalate.

After a period of high operational focus, the focus of the early November FMG was on the team's more strategic cross faculty roles. The website was also a good news story at this time. The Dean was very active himself in generating publicity for the new faculty about the refurbished building, new partnerships and international ventures. A key event of note in December for staff and students was the 'cross crit' week where studios presented an overview of their work to other students and members of staff. It was the first time A&D lecturers had undertaken this event which formed part of the Architecture calendar. It generally went well; however, some A&D course leaders noted that the process increased the sense of competition between studios. One lecturer was accused by a peer of giving her students too much coaching in order to make her studio look good. There was a significant volume of 'newness' for A&D, including studio residential trips that took place during November and a lot of work to implement the new shared History and Theory module. Lecturers stated that it was more work than they had anticipated and this was on top of the fire-fighting issues with basic facilities. A number of lecturers in A&D reported feeling stressed and some also began to question the extent to which the merger was a

takeover, an imposition of practice by diktak, rather than a merger. The Dean's view was that the model had been successful in Architecture and that implementing it as fully as possible was the best way to develop a single faculty and improve quality.

By January, the operational issues from the first academic quarter were largely resolved. However, A&D were still experiencing significant change and increase in workload. Lecturers still spoke about a sense of takeover, but also recognition that a number of initiatives, such as the new studio system were benefitting students. In January, the new Head of Fine Arts started and the Dean used the first FMG of the year to take FMG through strategic presentations he made at Executive level. FMG still voiced concerns about the volume of workload and a review of the administration team structure was initiated to try to get a better match with the needs of the faculty. However, the Dean was clear that the onus was now on the School Heads if they wanted to restructure their teams in a way that enabled them to function more effectively. There was news from the University that the second of the two A&D buildings (which had not undergone refurbishment) would be sold and replacement facilities would be provided in a nearby building. The Dean argued that this would enable the new building to be refurbished to the standard of the primary A&D building. However, it was clear that the volume of change that FMG had been experiencing would continue for some time. The Dean stated that he saw it as part of his role to keep FMG focussed on the longer term and to sustain the change process.

From May until the end of June was a period of intense activity for FMG and lecturers involved in marking and preparation for the summer exhibitions. The Architecture moderating process (checking the consistency of marks across the faculty) was longer and involved more senior staff than A&D was used to. Some A&D lecturers spoke of their resentment at being told that work did not warrant the mark they had given by someone who did not teach that particular subject. However, it was also noticeable that the Design School had a number of accolades in this quarter as well as the Architecture school which tended to have lots of good news stories. A design student won an important prize and the furniture-makers gained national publicity for their involvement with a major high street furniture retailer. In late June, once the summer shows were completed, building work commenced over

the summer recess.

Over the summer, both the Design School and Fine Art School heads made some structural changes to their teams and both gained new assistant posts to support their workload. There were also some new initiatives which the Dean argued had been in the original plan but it had just taken time to get round to them. One initiative was to broaden the scope of the History and Theory area and another was to create a stronger identity for the Urban Planning and Development area through the appointment of a high profile part-time Design Professor. The Student Experience Coordinator's role was significantly extended to take on Learning and Teaching across the faculty. Additionally, the Design School Head set up a project team to manage a number of small initiatives including preparation and planning for the move out of the A&D building.

Preparation for the start of the new academic year also included the completion of building refurbishment work. The work ran broadly to plan although there was a lot of late 'snagging' work to get the rooms habitable for students. The new term would see the arrival of the undergraduate Architecture students into the primary A&D building and the closure of the Architecture buildings. The term began with another round of studio selection but this time A&D course leaders expressed their relief that they were doing things for at least the second time and had gained in experience and confidence.

# Chapter 5: Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Meetings

## 5.1 Introduction

*"I think one of the interesting things about it was to try to persuade people, I mean it was about trying to put ambition back into everybody's thinking about this stage… easier said than done. There's a slight sort of sense of people sort of bumbling out of the prison into the light thinking… "Now what do I do, can I go back into the prison please?" … that's going to be one of the biggest challenges is to get people to sort of keep looking over the top of the hill."* (Dean)

Strategic change is typically characterised in terms of a redefinition of an organisation's mission and purpose in a way that reflects a significant shift in goals or direction (Gioia et al. 1994). An essential assumption underlying this definition is that such change requires a 'second order' shift in thinking (Bartunek 1984): a *cognitive* reorientation for the organisation (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 1994). Thus, there is a significant and growing body of research which considers strategic change from a sensemaking perspective (Balogun et al. 2015; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 1994; Sonenshein 2010). Studies in this tradition typically view senior executives as the main instigators of such change and as a result focus on how they influence its development exploring, for example, how managers '*sensegive'* (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991) in order to influence others towards their preferred redefinition of the organisation. Through sensegiving, top managers seek to encourage the rest of the organisation to interpret and make sense of the change in ways which align with their strategic intent. This focus on executive action is consistent with a Strategy as Practice (SAP) approach, which considers strategy as something people do in organisations, rather than strategy as a noun or something an organisation has (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2003; Whittington 2006).

Studies such as those by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), Gioia and Thomas (1996) and Gioia et al. (1994) focus on different aspects of the strategic change process, such as how top managers use sensegiving and sensemaking practices to initiate

strategic change. Other studies, for example Cornelissen et al. (2011), Rouleau and Balogun (2011) and Maitlis and Lawrence (2007), focus more on the specifics and content of sensegiving and how executives use it to influence, defining it as a symbolic process which involves language in particular. Rouleau and Balogun (2011) argue that sensegiving requires crafting and skill or "sensewrighting" (Mangham and Pye 1991) since recipients of senior executive sensegiving play an active role in the sensemaking process and may, therefore, draw unexpected and alternative interpretations from the sensegiving attempts of their managers leading to unintended consequences for the change process (Balogun et al. 2015; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Mantere et al. 2012; Sonenshein 2010). However, there are few studies that pull together these different elements of research to examine how senior executives sustain strategic change over time through their sensegiving and sensemaking practice, and how they continue to shape the sensemaking of others beyond the initiation phase of strategic change in order to realise their desired future vision.

In this chapter I address this challenge through a two year, real-time study of strategic change involving an internal merger between two faculties within a university. This was a top-down change led by the Dean of the new faculty. The research explores how the Dean, through his sensegiving and sensemaking actions and activities over time, facilitated and sustained the development of the joint entity in a way which was consistent with his preferred vision. My analysis reveals that the Dean as change leader made particular use of meetings to influence the managers of the newly merged faculty and guide their actions in relation to the change. Thus, the study focuses on the sensegiving activities of the Dean in the meetings and also the managers' responses as the recipients of these activities. My analysis also reveals and explores patterns in how the Dean structured the meetings. By analysing both how the meetings are structured and the detailed sensegiving activities of the Dean I am able to develop an explanation of how the change leader guided his team over time to deliver a demanding strategic change in line with his initial intent.

I find that this process is managed by two types of meetings, a driving form and a detecting form, both of which constitute particular types of sensegiving activity. The oscillation between the driving and detecting meetings is managed through a

process of sense monitoring which includes the recipient responses in the meetings and fact gathering between the meetings. In the paper these detailed findings are developed in to three main contributions. First, I develop a process model, drawing on the metaphors of establishing and managing the playing field, to account for how senior executive meeting based sensemaking and sensegiving can sustain processes of strategic change leading to a realised strategy that closely mirrors the intended. Second, I extend understanding of sensegiving competence through identification of the need to employ both processual and influencing skills to initiate and maintain a set of mutually reinforcing sensegiving actions over time. Third, I contribute more generally to Strategy as Practice research on strategy meetings (for example, Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Johnson et al. 2010; Kwon et al. 2014; Samra-Fredericks 2003; Whittle et al. 2015; Wodak et al. 2011)

### 5.2 A Sensemaking Perspective on Sustaining Strategic Change

Studies of strategic change frequently adopt a sensemaking perspective since significant change, such as organisational restructuring, has been shown to generate ambiguity and uncertainty through the disruption of existing organisational understandings, which triggers an intense search for new understanding that can guide action (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Maitlis and Christianson 2014). Sensemaking “gives primacy to the search for meaning as a way to deal with uncertainty” (Weick et al. 2005:414). Maitlis (2005:21) defines organisational sensemaking as “a fundamentally social process (in which) organisation members interpret their environment in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively”. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) established that strategic change is not just accompanied by processes of organisational sensemaking, but also “sensegiving” by the senior executives leading the change. They define sensegiving as a “process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organisational reality” (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991:442) and argue that sensegiving is a key part of a CEO's role in initiating strategic change and facilitating the interpretation of a new vision. Successful leader sensegiving influences the sensemaking of recipients such that, in thinking differently, they are motivated to act in different ways that are consistent with a new vision (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991;

Maitlis and Christianson 2014). Thus, a number of studies have incorporated the notion of sensegiving to explore both the sensemaking and sensegiving activity accompanying strategic change (Bartunek et al. 1999; Dunford and Jones 2000; Gioia et al. 1994; Monin et al. 2013; Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2011; Stensaker and Falkenberg 2007). Gioia et al. (1994), for example, investigate sensegiving during strategic change initiation in a university context and Rouleau (2005) examines the way that managers make sense of a new strategic direction and communicate the change to external clients through their sensegiving micro-practices.

Studies show sensegiving to be a skilled activity. Those leading change need to create appropriate opportunities for sensegiving to take place and possess discursive skill (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). As such, sensegiving is a political activity requiring the use of framing in order to influence others (Cornelissen et al. 2011; Mangham and Pye 1991; Rouleau and Balogun 2011; Whittle et al. 2015). On the other hand, while senior executives may be "institutionally empowered to introduce novel templates that redirect understandings" (Morgan 1997:263), studies show that managerial control is never absolute and does not extend to other people's interpretation processes. As a result the outcome of their sensegiving attempts may be recipient inferences, different to those intended, leading to outcomes that are not consistent with the initial change intent (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Mantere et al. 2012). Thus, it is important that studies exploring senior executive sensemaking and sensegiving also study how this sensemaking and sensegiving is interpreted and made sense of by others in their organisation as recipients (Bartunek et al. 1999; Sonenshein 2010), and explore the dynamic interaction between the executive sensemaking-sensegiving processes and those of organisational members.

Although studies reveal that managerial sensegiving is important, few explore how this unfolds over time, moving beyond change initiation to consider the role of sensegiving in progressing and sustaining change. Research has not examined the detail of what is said and done over time by the senior executives, or the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between how others respond, to understand how senior

executive sensegiving and sensemaking can influence the interpretations of organisational members towards a particular strategic intent. This in-depth understanding of strategic change is encouraged and championed by Strategy as Practice (SAP) scholars (Golsorkhi et al. 2015; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Whittington 2006). SAP research focuses on strategic change as strategising *work* and studies what it is that managers actually do (Johnson et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2003; Whittington 2003).

From a SAP perspective, strategy meetings are viewed as a type of strategic episode (Hendry and Seidl 2003) and are an important form of strategising work. Strategic episodes, such as meetings, provide opportunities for interaction to take place between different organisational members (Hendry and Seidl 2003; Jarzabkowski 2005). Meetings also provide important opportunities for sensegiving and sensemaking as research shows this tends to occur in formal situations where it is acceptable for organisational members to express their thoughts (Maitlis 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). This is especially true in certain contexts, such as universities, where meetings are a widely accepted form of coordination (for example, Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 1994; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008). There is a small body of research exploring strategy development in workshops or meetings (see, for example, Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Johnson et al. 2010; Kwon et al. 2014). However, it is argued that strategic episodes, such as meetings, are important for implementing and sustaining strategic change and not just for strategy formation (Hendry and Seidl 2003). Yet despite calls for longitudinal studies of strategic episodes (Vaara and Whittington 2012) we still know little about how senior executives as change leaders use meetings to connect strategy formulation and implementation, and to sustain and drive strategic change over time.

In this chapter, I argue that meetings are an important means of coordination and control for deliberate strategic change efforts by senior executives. Thus, it is argued here that they offer an ideal setting to examine how top managers guide and shape the interpretations and actions of organisational members towards intended goals in planned processes of strategic change through their sensemaking and sensegiving activities. I explore this in a university context given that, in such settings, meetings

are a widely accepted and important form of coordination and control. I seek to understand: how do senior executives sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving in change management meetings?

### 5.3 Case Study and Methods

An in-depth, longitudinal research approach is adopted to study how managers sustain strategic change initiatives through sensemaking and sensegiving in meetings. This study follows the meetings over time during the process of implementation of strategic change and adopting a real-time and qualitative case study approach. A single case study is appropriate as I am undertaking exploratory research of a phenomenon that is poorly understood (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Yin 2013). I adopt a qualitative research approach as I seek to capture people's worldviews within their organisational context (Lee 1999). This is also consistent with an interpretive research approach (Clark et al. 2010).

I was fortunate to be granted access to a university faculty which was implementing strategic change, hereafter called Unik. My access included consent to attend all relevant meetings. Unik is a large UK university which was granted university status in 1992. Like many UK universities, it operates under increasing competitive and commercial pressure. However, it is also characterised by the diverse interests and multiple goals that typically exist within universities, often in tension with each other, that make them difficult to manage (Denis et al. 2007). The study follows a significant internal reorganisation to merge an Art & Design faculty and an Architecture faculty. When the Dean who headed the Art & Design faculty (hereafter abbreviated to Arts faculty) retired, the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture was invited to step in as conjoint Dean of the two faculties. He undertook a three month review of the Arts faculty and, despite some misgivings, recommended to the VC and Board of Governors that the two faculties should merge. The Dean spoke privately about his misgivings in recommending a merger because Architecture was considered to be an area of excellence and there was a risk in merging that its culture and reputation would be diluted and damaged. The Arts faculty had a much weaker reputation and was significantly larger with more than double the number of students. The Dean's plan for the merger included a clear vision which would deliver a merged faculty of

strong repute. The plans included significant cost saving, mostly through relocation and space saving, but also went beyond this. His vision included significant changes to the curriculum as well as building improvements that would enhance the ethos, quality and reputation of the new faculty. He envisioned a Bauhaus-style coming together of Art, Design and Architecture which would facilitate shared live projects and increase interdisciplinary collaboration. The Dean's merger plan included a 'harmonisation' year in which the faculties would begin to work together. This harmonisation phase also included other significant elements of the plan, such as the building refurbishment, management restructure and curriculum realignment work. This phase was to be, followed by a full merger from August 2012.

Real-time data collection began in September 2011 at the start of the harmonisation year. Early in the process it became clear that the Dean was using the faculty management group (FMG) meetings as a vehicle for managing and coordinating the change process. The FMG meetings became a focal point for the research as they were the main venue for managing both operational and strategic issues and, as such, offered an ideal opportunity to study sensegiving activity.

### *5.3.1 Data Collection*

Meeting attendance provided an opportunity to observe and capture in-depth, real-time data on the sensegiving and sensemaking activities of the Dean and the FMG team. Typically there were about 12 people at the FMG meeting including the Dean. Membership of FMG and thus attendance at the meeting was determined by the Dean and was largely based on grade (Associate Dean and Academic Leader level) and position, which included the Deputy Dean, School and Deputy School Heads and cross-faculty roles such as Marketing Head, Business Manager, Technical Head and Project Office Head. However, the Dean expressed his desire to have an 'egalitarian' group where no area was left not knowing what was going on so, for example, he invited the Student Experience co-ordinator to attend the meetings as a de facto FMG member, despite her being at a lower grade. I tracked the strategic change process and attended meetings within the faculty for two years. I audio-recorded the meetings and made detailed field notes, particularly focussing on the Dean but also recording the behaviours, responses and actions of the meeting

participants. In total I observed 105 meetings, including lower level meetings that FMG members chaired. In this particular study, however, I focus on the FMG meetings, 51 in all, as these meetings were the locale in which the Dean discussed both operational and strategic issues with the faculty management group. The audio recorded length of the shortest meeting was 41 minutes, the longest was 220 minutes, and the average was 122 minutes. Whilst focussing on the meetings data, I also wanted to capture thoughts, feelings and interpretations (Langley 1999). Meetings data was supplemented by audio recorded interviews with the Dean, as change leader, to explore his thinking about the meetings and the change process as it progressed. I also interviewed the FMG meeting participants to explore how they were interpreting and making sense of the Dean's sensegiving activities as change progressed. In total I conducted 56 interviews with the Dean and FMG members. The audio recorded length of the shortest interview was 33 minutes, the longest 95 minutes, and the average 61 minutes. A further 42 interviews with non FMG members, people at executive level and people who reported to FMG members, were conducted but do not form part of this particular study. Other relevant documents were also collected including newsletters, meeting minutes, information shared before the meeting and handouts circulated during the meeting. Interviews and meetings were transcribed in full. The shortest interview transcript was 5221 words, the longest 17,461 words, and the average 9913 words. The shortest meeting transcript was 6367 words, the longest 32,890 words and the average 18,619 words.

Consistent with others (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004) I took a number of steps to ensure the trustworthiness of the data following many of the criteria laid down by Lincoln and Guba (1985). I had prolonged engagement with the research site during which time the data were collected using multiple methods and sources of real-time data collection. Finally the research was written up though a thick description of the findings to enable their transfer to other settings.

### *5.3.2 Data Analysis*

Data Analysis consisted of a number of phases. I began the analysis by developing a chronological narrative (Pentland 1999); this involved developing a timeline-based

account of events which was then further developed to create a thick description (Langley 1999; Van Maanen 1979). I initially focussed on the Dean and used both field notes and interviews to explore what he did and said in the meetings and to capture an account, from the Dean's perspective, about what he was aiming to achieve at particular points in time and how he felt the change was progressing. This thick description helped me to develop an initial understanding of how the Dean was giving sense to others about the change and making sense of it himself. For example, it surfaced a number of activities that the Dean engaged in which guided and influenced sensemaking within FMG meetings, such as agenda setting, and discursive activities used to uncover problems, such as probing area reporting. In the next stage, this account was extended, using both meetings data and field notes, but also drawing on interview data from the FMG members, to understand how they were responding to the Dean's sensegiving activities.

To develop the analysis further I entered the interview and meetings data into NVivo to facilitate coding. I developed emergent themes using an inductive approach (Miles and Huberman 1994) and began by coding the Dean's sensemaking and sensegiving to develop my understanding of how this unfolded over time. These categories were initially based on 'in vivo' codes using the terminology of the interviewees and were very detailed (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Van Maanen 1979). As my coding developed, through clustering of related items I was able to create higher level categories and to focus my analysis on process coding (Miles and Huberman 1994) to identify terms that described what the Dean was doing. So, for example 'yes, I think you're right' is an in vivo code which contributes to a process code category of 'agreeing'. Langley (2007) argues that process codes add a sense of movement which encourages consideration of how that activity is achieved over time and is consistent with others adopting a Strategy as Practice perspective. Through this clustering of process codes, I constructed a set of first-order and second order codes in a tree structure, following what has become known as "the Gioia method" (Gioia et al. 2013; Langley and Abdallah 2012). Gioia et al. (2013) argue that the tree structure improves qualitative rigour through the systematic reporting of informant-centric codes, developed from the data, and the link to the inductive second-order concepts developed by the researcher. The data structure

was developed into a process model in order to capture and show the relational dynamics between the different concepts (Gioia et al. 2013).

The full data structure for the analysis is in Figure 5-1. When following the Gioia method, tables of supporting quotes would usually be provided within the paper. In this instance, the tables of quotes are large and I have included them in Appendix A. The coding structure identified four different types of sensegiving by the Dean – sense-building, sense-challenging, sense-directing and sense-managing related to different types of sensegiving need. Sense-building related to the perceived need (or a perceived sensemaking gap) by the Dean to build confidence or ambition since recipients appeared to be in broad agreement but not confident. The words used by the Dean, which were eventually categorised as sense-building, related to reassuring people they were doing the right thing or supporting them to deliver what they intended to more quickly or to a higher standard. On the other hand, sense-challenging examples contain language that might alter the recipient's view point and steer them in a different direction, for example, when it was not clear that there was broad agreement. These are more 'persuasive', 'interrogative' and occasionally 'coercive'. Examples of sense-directing were identified when there did not appear to be a state of agreement or disagreement but of a gap in terms of knowledge or understanding. In this case sensegiving took on a form that included 'explaining' and 'synthesising'. The final form of sensegiving in the meeting by the Dean I labelled sense-managing. Sense-managing refers to discourse or other activities which created the opportunity for sensegiving through skilled Chairing of the meeting to ensure that everyone was able to speak. Mostly notably, the Dean was skilled at 'curtailing' and 'closing' which involved diplomatically moving people on to the next topic.

## Figure 5-1 Data Structure

| First order concepts | Second-Order Themes | Aggregate Dimensions | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Meetings - Initial Process (Dean)** | | | |
| Maintain focus on the plan and quality delivery<br>No dark corners<br>Provide structure yet allow autonomy | Creating the Rules | | |
| Designing the FMG team structure<br>Choosing people with Vision<br>Choosing people who can show autonomy and collegiality | Shaping the Team | | **Establishing the playing field** |
| **Meetings (Dean)** | | | |
| Adding exceptional meeting | **Sense-Managing** (shapes structure of meeting – driving or detecting, enables sensegiving opportunities) | **Driving** or **Detecting** | |
| Inviting FMG to discuss exceptional item at end of meeting e.g. five issues for next year | | | **Managing the Playing Field** |
| Changing focus of area reporting | | | |
| Adding exceptional presentations from Dean, other FMG members or invited speakers | | | |
| Inviting attendees from lower level meetings | | | |
| Changing order of speakers | | | |
| Chasing minutes and reports for Board Pack | | | |
| Meeting closing or curtailing conversation | | | |
| Meeting coaching - how to participate | | | |
| Meeting steering, Chairing | | | |
| acknowledging, apologising | **Sense-Building** (form of sensegiving) | | |
| allocating resource | | | |
| encouraging, energising, reassuring, heroing | | | |
| agreeing | | | |
| inviting , involving, requesting ideas | | | |
| humour (external focus or FMG focus – good-natured) | | | |
| criticising (external), warning (external) | **Sense-Directing** (form of sensegiving) | | |
| deciding, focusing | | | |
| explaining, informing | | | |
| generating actions, tasking | | | |
| untangling, synthesising | | | |
| criticising, criticising softly, | **Sense-Challenging** (form of sensegiving) | | |
| humour (FMG focus - mildly unkind) | | | |
| Interrogating, countering (disputing) | | | |
| ordering, encouraging (to do differently) | | | |
| persuading, persuading advising, | | | |
| warning (internal), warning softly | | | |
| **Meetings (Recipients)** | | | |
| High leader competence<br>Need to feel secure<br>Need to feel respected<br>Change does not involve significant negative impact on staff or students | Recipient Rules | | **Managing the Playing Field** |
| **Meetings (Recipient Responses)** | | | |
| supporting, praising | **Sense-Aligning** (showing you're on board) | **Mavericking** or **Wrangling** | |
| accepting, celebrating, humour (good-natured) | | | |
| progressing, suggesting | | | |
| seeking information, agreeing | | | |
| Informing, confirming | **Sense-Disclosing** (sharing your news) | | **Managing the Playing Field** |
| issue raising | | | |
| shielding | **Sense Counter-Challenging** (countering the change leader) | | |
| countering, humour (mildly unkind) | | | |
| persuading, warning | | | |
| leaving meeting early, non attendance, templates missing, changing subject | **Sense-Limiting** (reduces opportunity for sensegiving) | | |
| **Meetings - Before and after Meetings (Dean)** | | | |
| Reflecting on previous FMG meeting reactions and Rules | **Sense-Monitoring** (determining nature of next meeting - driving or detecting) | | **Managing the Playing Field** |
| Gathering new information internal to faculty e.g. ad-hoc and formal meetings, one-to-ones | | | |
| Gathering new information internal to University e.g. executive meetings | | | |
| Gathering new information external e.g. partnership meetings, trade press | | | |

At this stage I began to work with the metaphor of the Dean as a coach managing his players on the field. The meetings seemed to be a little like the times a coach spends with a team in the changing room before, during and after a match to unpack their performance and what they need to do differently. This led me to explore how else the Dean was managing the playing field. I identified two patterns in the way the meetings were structured – driving and detecting. The process was managed by oscillating between these two meetings, with the Driving meetings establishing new pieces of change that now needed to be put into place and looking to the future, and the Detecting meetings checking on and pushing progress. My coding revealed that both these two major types of meetings involved sense-managing, building, challenging and directing by the Dean. However, sense-managing, in terms of the format of the meeting was quite different and this resulted in a different intensity of the different sensegiving types. Detecting meetings involved a consistently applied agenda with a focus on area reporting and investigating change progress from the perspective of the change recipients. This was occasionally enhanced in ways that increased the depth of oversight, for example, by inviting staff from lower down the organisation to report directly to FMG on a pressing current issue such as student recruitment. This type of meeting tended to result in a balance of sense-building, challenging and directing by the Dean and also include sense-managing.

Driving meetings usually had the same broad agenda as the detecting meetings (Chair's Announcements, Review of Minutes and Actions, Area Reports, Any other Business) but significantly more novelty in terms of agenda items that also tended to be more forward looking. This included guest speakers, special presentations by the Dean or, for example, an opportunity for FMG to state their five strategic priorities for the coming year. These meetings had higher sense-building and sense-directing by the Dean and lower sense-challenging.

I then sought to establish how the Dean decided on the meeting type. Looking outside the meeting, at the key processes before and after the meeting, my coding identified two main areas which I referred to as 'establishing the playing field' and 'sense-monitoring'. Establishing the playing field occurred prior to the start of merger related activity and involved 'creating the rules' or underlying principles that would

guide the Dean in developing the initial structure of the meetings and the format and content over time, as well as shaping the team. The rules included, for example, maintaining focus on the plan and quality delivery and shaping the team included, for example, designing the team structure.

'Sense-monitoring' captures the ongoing processes before and after the meeting that afforded the Dean the opportunity to reflect on the previous meeting and recipient responses and gather new information. 'Sense-monitoring' feeds into the design of the next meeting by the Dean, which takes on either a 'driving' or 'detecting' form; leading to a particular form of sense-managing.

The fact that the recipient meeting responses at one point in time influenced the nature of the next meeting led me to explore the response of FMG team members (the recipients in the meetings) to the Dean's sensegiving activities. I adopted the same first-order, second-order approach. Analysis shows they responded to the Dean's sensegiving within the meetings, mainly through their discursive ability. For example, after failing to convince the Dean that a situation was truly troubling, a School Head likened herself to Cassandra who in Greek mythology had the gift of prophecy and the curse of never being believed. The findings identified four different types of recipient sensegiving: sense-aligning, sense-counter-challenging, sense-disclosing, and sense-limiting (see data structure in Figure 5-1). These bear some similarities to those identified for the Dean but relate to different types of sensegiving need appropriate to a recipient response. Recipient sensegiving that takes the form of sense-aligning demonstrates support for the Dean and the plan. The words used by FMG suggest that that they are onboard with the plan and making progress. This includes, for example, 'supporting' and 'praising'. Sense-counter-challenging on the other hand, was a form of recipient sensegiving where the recipients stood their ground and defended their corner and included, for example, 'persuading' and 'shielding' (supporting or defending others). Counter-challenging became a focus of my research on recipient response in later analysis of meeting structure as it was most closely related to attempts to derail the plan. Sense-disclosing was a form of recipient sensegiving that was more factual and involved information sharing which was the main purpose of the meeting. This included, for example, 'informing' and 'confirming'. Finally sense-limiting was used as a category to describe any behaviour

which limited the recipient's response to the Dean's sensegiving, for example, changing the subject or leaving the meeting early. Sense-limiting was an activity which had both a discursive element, for example, changing the subject but also a physical one, such as, non attendance or not providing a report.

I identified that sense-counter-challenging was one of the most significant recipient responses. My analysis revealed that in detecting meetings this typically involved both individuals and groups. I used the term 'wrangling' where there are a number of counter-challenging examples directed towards the Dean from a number of different people, on the same issue. In driving meetings this pattern of repeated counter-challenging was occasional and tended to involve an individual rather than groups. To reflect its individual nature and contrast it with the style found in detecting meetings, I termed this, 'mavericking'. This counter-challenging would then form part of the Dean's reflection on the meeting and his design for the next meeting. In particular, I found examples where a series of detecting meetings with higher levels of 'wrangling' was followed by a 'driving meeting' which temporarily lifted the debate from ongoing and thorny implementation issues to more strategic and inspiring forward thinking which also tended to invoke less counter-challenging. Mavericking was a weaker form of counter-challenging and tended to be addressed within the meeting.

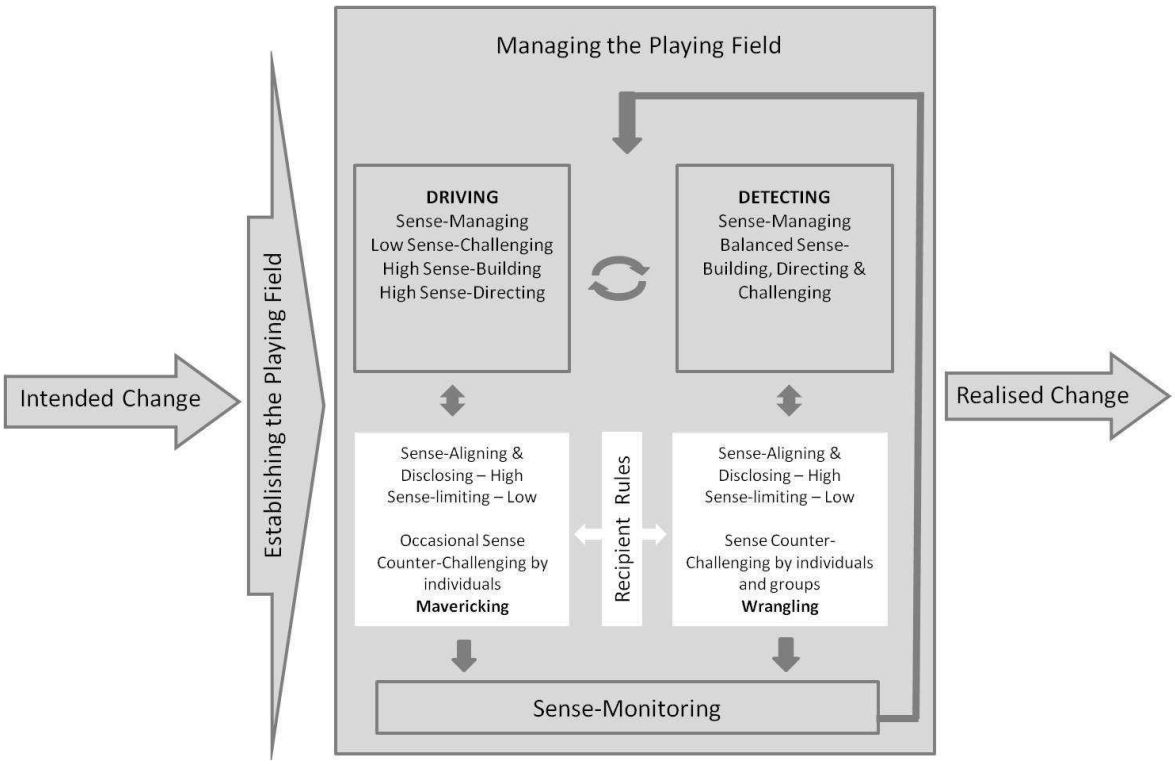
The level of FMG compliance with both the process and content of the meetings ran counter to my expectations of a university context where academics are often portrayed as difficult to manage. Further analysis revealed that FMG had their own set of underlying rules that determined whether they would comply with the Dean's managing of the playing field or push back. Push-back was low, for example, in areas where the interview data showed that recipients felt the Dean had high leader competence and when he met FMG's need to feel both secure and respected.

Figure 5-2 shows the development of the model from my aggregate constructs. In what follows I provide evidence of the different components of this model and explain how everything hangs together.

## 5.4 Findings and Analysis

The next section will present a process model (see Figure 5-2) based on the data structure in Figure 5-1 and discuss the findings of the analysis in greater narrative depth with supporting quotes.

**Figure 5-2 Process Model**




### *5.4.1 Establishing the Playing Field*

The Dean designed the change with a 'harmonisation' period to allow the two faculties to work alongside each other before fully merging. Whilst keen to make the merger a success, he also expressed awareness of a significant risk in merging his high performing unit with one that had the lowest NSS (National Student Survey) score in the university.

> *Dean "I have a faculty with the highest NSS score which is Architecture and I have the faculty with the lowest NSS score [Art & Design]… generally a woeful NSS score for student satisfaction. So there is an inherent issue there and it's very much to do with what I was saying previously about harmonisation before you merge because obviously the risk to Architecture in terms of its NSS score dropping."*

He undertook a three month review at the start of the process which involved significant consultation with staff from both faculties in order to develop his vision and plan for the merger. The plans included significant estates investment and were

formally reviewed by an external auditor appointed by the Finance Director and signed off by the Board of Governors and presented to the faculty. As such, the Dean felt he had a clear mandate for change. He had signed up to deliver the plan, effectively staked his reputation and perhaps his future employment on it, and it was his job to fully implement it.

*Dean: "it is just what was agreed and that went through due process and everybody agreed to it and we have to resist any temptation to retreat from that."*

I used the term 'Establish the Playing Field' based on evidence of the Dean's deliberate thinking not just about the content of the plan but about how he would implement it through a carefully orchestrated design of meetings that would establish an arena through which he could lead people through the change. The data shows his detailed consideration of the meetings design, including the structure of the meetings, such as, how often, how long and the format, for example, agenda and selecting people who he thought would deliver the change effectively. Once the 'playing field' or meetings system was established, the Dean was able to manage the change from the sidelines, like a sports manager, and use the meetings to coach the team.

*Dean: "I don't enjoy the micro management but this system, I think would work, as long as one can lead it."*

#### *5.4.1.1 Creating the Rules*

In Establishing the Playing field, the underlying rules I identified that seemed to best capture the Dean's thinking in regard to the design of the meeting were: Maintain focus on the plan and quality delivery, No dark corners, and Provide structure yet autonomy. The underlying rule 'no dark corners' refers to a meeting design which, to use my sports metaphor, would provide a floodlit playing field. In order to lead the change the Dean expressed a desire for issues in the faculty to be visible and transparent. Faculty management meetings took place fortnightly. Before each meeting FMG members had to submit a template highlighting key issues that had arisen and actions that were being undertaken. The Dean designed and imposed a structure where, in the week between FMG meetings, the three School Heads (Art, Design and Architecture) held School meetings and other FMG members held cross-faculty area meetings (with reps from each of the schools), for example, for

Marketing, Technicians, Administration, Projects. These meeting had a similar format to the FMG meeting i.e. Review of Minutes and Actions, Chair's Announcements, Area Reports (turn-taking by each attendee to report key issues in their area) and Any other Business (AoB). The meetings were minuted by an administrator and the minutes were collated before FMG as a printed Board pack along with a template (key issues) from each member of FMG.

*Dean:" the sort of most important point around that which sounds so draconian but it has to be the case is the cycle is really non-negotiable. So even at times of high pressure, those meetings need to happen in that weekly cycle and the minutes need to be with us on the Friday…because we do not have time to go dark during the whole period of assessment, and there's too much on our plates."*

The meeting Minutes provided an audit trail of the issues and their resolution. Furthermore, in order to ensure there were no dark corners, the Dean made sure attendance was high at the FMG meeting by designating Wednesday a 'faculty day' where the team had to work in the open plan office located close to the meeting room and had been asked to clear their diaries for the meeting. Also he led by example by having high attendance himself and arriving on time. If someone could not attend the meeting then, providing they submitted their template and Area Report, the Dean would go through that in the meeting and highlight salient issues to the rest of FMG.

The underlying principle I identified, that the 'playing field' should 'provide structure yet allow autonomy', was based on the way that the meetings structure was designed and implemented which helped to ensure the structure was adhered to over time. For example, there were few cancellations and timetables were sent out with a meetings calendar for FMG meetings and School/Area meetings that ran throughout the year.

*FMG Member: "So [the Dean] won't give up on his number of meetings and minutes and his templates."*

The Dean also insisted that the meetings structure was the main communication channel for raising and resolving issues.

*Dean: "effectively this sounds again idealistic, but it isn't idealistic, the aim is to have no discussion of, no sort of major discussion of faculty policy except through FMG, so in terms of management. And that means that the school team meetings and everything has to work very well, because otherwise, what I'm trying to avoid is*

*this constant bypassing of the hierarchy...So what I don't want to do is have too many sort of other structures. The aim is to get the school meetings going and to have them minuted and fed into the faculty group."*

*Dean: "I mean you're attending FMG now and there's nothing that's happening or being considered or anything that isn't part of the discussion at FMG to be quite honest."*

To facilitate this, the Dean stated the he had actively refrained from talking directly with people below FMG level.

*Dean: "I've tried as far as the faculty is concerned, the staff, to be in the background for a year because one's really, really wanting each of the heads of area since they were formally in post last August, to genuinely take ownership of their area, set up their teams, communicate, do whatever they're doing."*

*Dean: "one doesn't want to step on the toes of any of the people who are running those areas which is against my nature, so trying to stay clear from it."*

He was clear that his (untypical) lack of engagement with staff and students below FMG level was deliberate and was just during the first year of the change. At the end of the research period he began to talk of reaching out to people again but still steering their ideas back up through the Schools and the meetings.

*Dean: "…[next year] I'm going to spend a lot of time doing, supporting staff and students at the level of delivery so that one gets re-acquainted in a sort of day to day basis with all of the members of staff and groups of students."*

Even at FMG level, the format of the meeting was set by the Dean and FMG had very limited ability to add agenda items to the meetings or alter the format.

The Dean believed that creating a system with strong oversight would allow people to operate autonomously but with enough transparency that he could use the meetings to guide them back on to the intended change path if they appeared to stray.

*Dean "… the basic principle is you are in a school, you are autonomous in the same way – semi autonomous in the same way I want to be autonomous as a faculty,"*

These rules or principles were not explicit or clearly stated, they were his own thoughts shared with the researcher in interviews. The rule 'provide structure yet

allow autonomy' had a link to the Dean's role as a practising Architect and teacher. He jointly ran a 'free studio', a year-long module where, rather than selecting a particular theme, students were free to undertake a major project of their own choosing. He talked to students about the free studio and about all the structures in place to make sure the students made a commitment to what they were going to deliver, such as, a written contract with a range of deliverables during the year. His words to students closely reflected the sense of balance between autonomy and structure, "*To have freedom you have to have very strong structures to support that freedom*".

'Maintain focus on the plan and quality delivery' was the third key principle I identified. The meetings provide an arena through which the Dean had opportunities to identify implementation issues through area reporting, to introduce new changes and to raise ambition. The Dean's explicit mantra was 'quality, quality, quality'. Quality from the Dean's perspective included external reputation and factors such as the high NSS score of Architecture compared with Art & Design. He also referred to quality in terms of delivering the plan in its purest form without retreating from it. This involved Art & Design adopting much of the academic model of Architecture, for example, curriculum design, studio system and strong focus on critique. The Dean expressed awareness that adaptations might be needed but stated that he wanted compromise to occur in light of evidence and experience and not simply because people were unwilling to adopt the new approach. He argued that full adoption was the fastest and most effective way to ensure that the merger improved the quality of the Art & Design part of the faculty and did not damage the Architecture area.

> *Dean: "The response in many cases is not to push harder to go for the purest version of it that will work. The response is to compromise, and to nibble away at the true structures, such as the studio systems, such as crits, such as things that are designed in their purest form to bring about the change, to sort of compromise on that such that actually ultimately it makes it harder because it's slower and it's less effective."*

The rule 'Focus on the plan and quality delivery' refers to the content of the meetings (area reporting particularly focused on progress against the plan). The flexibility of the meeting format enabled the Dean to introduce special presentations under Chair's Announcements that were forward looking or about quality (particularly for

Driving meetings). The agenda was owned and set by the Dean and meetings were focussed, time constrained, and it was difficult for people to discuss issues other than the plan and quality delivery. The meetings were structured in such a way that they provided a relentless focus over time on delivering the plan and delivering quality. The Dean spoke of his sense that people are looking for an opportunity to take their foot off the gas or revert back to more familiar ways of working but he also states that he sees it as his role to help people to stay focussed on the future.

*Dean: "There's a slight sort of sense of people sort of bumbling out of the prison into the light thinking...."Now what do I do, can I go back into the prison please?" …and I think that notwithstanding all of the really tough academic stuff that needs to be done to get the new courses in line, that's going to be one of the biggest challenges is to get people to be sort of keep looking over the top of the hill."*

#### *5.4.1.2 Shaping the Team*

The other element in establishing the playing field was "shaping the team". To return to the playing field as a sporting metaphor, he chose his team of players and the positions they would play in. The Dean designed a structure with three School Heads who each had a cross-faculty role. He stated that whilst they had autonomy as a school head they also needed to work collaboratively on their cross-faculty role. The Dean argued that he wanted people to have a sense of ownership of their School but not so much that they did not work collaboratively as a faculty.

*Dean: "So, actually, it's impossible in this system for anyone of the heads of schools or associate deans to be lording it over the others. Because of the 0.4 they have to communicate with each other, they have to talk to each other, they have to cooperate."*

Once the FMG team was in place the meetings usually consisted of about 12 people (Dean, Deputy Dean, 3 School Heads, 2 Deputy School Heads and then cross-faculty FMG roles such as Marketing Head, Business Manager, Technical Head, Project Office Head, Student Experience co-ordinator). This was a larger forum than in other faculties in the university but can be linked to the underlying rule 'no dark corners' in that all areas of the faculty were represented and sharing information.

*Dean: "I think it's egalitarian. I would hate it if it just reduced down to three or four of us just sitting around scheming. It would be horrible. It would get very tedious. I don't think I could cope with that degree of…I think it would be slow because you'd end up everybody mistrusting everybody else and not understanding what's going on."*

The Dean restructured the senior team during the harmonisation period and thus had an opportunity to choose his team. A recurring theme was ‘choosing people with vision’. This was clearly represented through the interview and selection process where each candidate was asked to present their vision for the area that they were applying for. The Dean stated that he expected the Vision to be ambitious and to drive quality. If recruited then the person was expected to implement it. Another theme was ‘choosing people who can show autonomy and collegiality’. The Dean made it clear that the organisation structure required autonomy (School Heads) and collegiality (School Head cross-faculty role) and that he would encourage these qualities in the people he selected for the roles.

> *Dean: “And I will just stomp on anybody who is using their portfolio to in any way sort of play power games. And, if we can just get that balance right, anybody who is trying to, for instance, feather their research nests in relation to their school in their role as... we will just name and shame them instantaneously, everybody will have to be completely generous in terms of their cross faculty role."*

### *5.4.2 Managing the Playing Field*

The metaphor of managing the playing field refers to the idea of a coach who, having selected the team and the different positions that they play in (establishing the playing field), wants to watch the game unfold and coach the team to meeting their end goal, winning. Sense-monitoring enables the Dean to see the game unfold with the same richness of information as a manager sitting in the stands on the halfway line of a floodlit playing field. This information is then used to determine whether the team talk (the meetings) takes on a detecting or driving form.

#### *5.4.2.1 Detecting Meetings*

Most meetings took on a detecting form. In detecting meetings the focus of the meeting was on area reporting which provided the Dean with the opportunity to hear, understand and, if necessary, challenge, direct or support the team members. The meeting format involved review of Minutes and Actions, Chair’s Announcement, Area Reports and AoB. Typically the Dean used Chair’s Announcements to bring in new information from outside the faculty and to report on any issues that he was dealing with personally, for example, establishing an international partnership. Chair’s Announcements was an opportunity for the Dean to share news and close a gap in

knowledge and understanding between the Dean and FMG through sensegiving. In detecting meetings it predominantly took on a sense-directing form (informing, explaining).

Area reporting typically proceeded in the same order at each meeting with the Deputy Dean first, then Heads of School and then the other FMG members. The whole meeting lasted on average 2hrs and 15 minutes and typically each area report was from 2 to 10 minutes depending on the severity of the issues raised. For each area report the printed Board Pack contained the Minutes of the School/Area meeting and the template of key issues for that area. The person reporting would talk through the template, highlighting key issues including successes as well as problems.

*Dean: "The Minutes are a public record of a public meeting. This [template of issues] is you saying "bloody hell" I need you to think about this."*

In Detecting meetings, the Dean engaged in sense-directing, challenging and building in broadly equal measure.

#### *5.4.2.1.1 Sense-directing (change leader)*

Sense-directing included the Dean explaining how things would work, for example, executive level changes or the faculty position on an issue, or untangling a discussion in order to summarise the key points such that actions could be generated. Examples of sense-directing were identified in instances where people appeared to lack understanding or knowledge and particularly when that was needed to take action. The example below shows typical sense-directing in response to an area report by the Marketing Head. The Dean 'untangled' or synthesised the report into a clear set of actions.

*FMG Member: "That's it for me."*
*Dean "Ok. Just to reiterate, those, that action point by the end of the week which is the really, really important one is three fold, a decision and a proposal regarding clearing without interviews, speedy interviews and the impact that has on the clearing rota and confirmation that each of the schools provides management support for clearing. I think that's really important because of the decision making. I think that's by the end of the week."*

#### *5.4.2.1.2 Sense-challenging (change leader)*

Sense-challenging examples arose when someone making an area report said something that the Dean appeared to disagree with or wanted to probe further. Sense-challenging included interrogating someone to understand the nature of a delay or problem, clearly trying to persuade a debate towards a particular solution or encouraging someone to do something differently. Unlike sense-directing, sense-challenging involved trying to steer people from a current way of thinking or acting towards a different course. As such it appeared, from my observation, to be more uncomfortable to be on the receiving end than for directing or building.

*Dean: "The Events Group is not functioning yet and I think you need to take that by the scruff of the neck because it's not just about having events it's about having a coherent set of events."*
*Dean: "There are multiple levels of compromise from the ideal but let's for God's sake at least start with the ideal and then compromise from it."*

#### *5.4.2.1.3 Sense-building (change leader)*

Sense-building appeared to be a more pleasant experience for the recipient and involved the Dean agreeing with the person, praising them or offering them additional resources. It also involved encouraging people and reassuring them that they were supported. A slightly less benign form was around raising ambition where the Dean and the recipient appeared to be in broad agreement but the Dean was encouraging someone to go further or be more ambitious in their thinking. FMG members talked of meeting with the Dean and finding they had agreed to do more than they expected and this combination, of praise combined with urging people to do a bit more, might well explain that. In this example, the Dean encourages the Technical Head, who is already planning to meet with the technicians to discuss their roles, to use the meeting ambitiously to boldly re-imagine their role within the faculty.

*Dean: "the offer is that this group of people who I respect enormously are being given the opportunity under your leadership to say what they think it should be and bounce it back the other way. The chains are off, let's have some blue sky thinking about the technical area because it goes far beyond servicing the academics."*

#### *5.4.2.1.4 Sense-disclosing (recipient response)*

In both driving and detecting meetings the recipient response to the Dean's sensegiving was predominantly sense-disclosing (sharing news and updating everyone) and sense-aligning.

*FMG Member: "We know it's at the end but they've not actually confirmed a date as such... but at the moment it's still in progress." (sense-disclosing)*

#### *5.4.2.1.5 Sense-aligning (recipient response)*

In sense-aligning examples recipients seemed keen to demonstrate that they were onboard with the changes and making good progress.

*Dean: "So that's progressing positively?" FMG Member: "Oh, yeah, definitely. Definitely."*

#### *5.4.2.1.6 Sense-counter-challenging (recipient response)*

Sense-counter-challenging was less common, reflecting the fact that generally the team appeared to accept the Dean's authority and the need to deliver the planned change or were reluctant to challenge him in the meeting. Where counter-challenging did arise by individuals it was addressed directly by the Dean or quietly ignored and the meeting moved on.

*Dean: "I know it sounds, everything sounds tight but compared to some things we're trying to do on tighter time scales …FMG Member: It's not an inability to do them, as you well know [Dean] it is giving people notice so that it is a success…Dean: well then you've got to be second semester… but we're getting things in dates when they just won't work."*

#### *5.4.2.1.7 Sense-managing – closing and chairing (change leader)*

I identified a pattern of Chairing which is a form of sense-managing (managing the meeting process and the opportunity for sensegiving, for example, through changing the agenda). In particular the Dean was very adept at 'closing' and 'curtailing' which involved moving people on to the next topic or reminding them how much was left to go through and in the majority of cases recipients took the hint and did not continue to push the issue.

*Dean: "let's come back to that in your report. [FMG1] would you finish this section so [FMG2] can do hers and then we'll come back to yours before we break in a quarter of an hour."*

#### *5.4.2.1.8 Wrangling (recipient response)*

On occasion meetings became tetchier, particularly at peak periods of change and workload pressure when people were more likely to be tired and stressed. This was particularly evident where multiple FMG members appeared to 'gang up' on the Dean and the sense that the change process was at risk of derailing. I called this

'wrangling' and it occurred when there was a strong sense that the Dean was wrong, for example, the Dean suggesting that the MA show could be cancelled, or being unreasonable, such as, creating work overload by pressing the team to complete appraisals for all staff members in a short time frame. This also occurred at the start of term when problems on the ground were so serious that an FMG member felt able to challenge the Dean and was supported by others. I identified that the level of sense-counter challenging was likely to be more intense when it was in response to the Dean's challenging (rather than sense-building or directing). So like was met with like.

*Sense-counter challenging in response to sense-directing: "One of the reasons it hasn't been possible is because…"*

*Sense-counter challenging in response to sense-challenging: "It's non-negotiable. It would cause complete chaos with student experience."… "We can't. We can't. We can't."*

I noticed a pattern of counter-balancing of criticism. When the Dean was counter-challenged, people would often use sense-building (demonstration of agreement) soon after within the meeting. Generally there appeared to be a reluctance to counter-challenge the Dean for a sustained period without doing something to demonstrate allegiance.

*FMG1 to Dean: "You'll be addressing the notices there? The '[Architecture] bums go home'." (some graffiti found on a wall early in the change process)*
*Dean to FMG1: "Sorry?" (clearly surprised at the language used)*
*FMG1 to Dean: "The '[Architecture] bums go home' notices, you'll be addressing?"*
*FMG2 to FMG3: "...if you want to have a copy of what I've presented so..."*
*FMG3 to FMG2: "That would be helpful."*
*Dean to everyone: "Okay, thank you." (ignores FMG1 and moves meeting on)*
*FMG1 to everyone: "the stuff [FMG4] prepared is absolutely fantastic...the slides you prepared...Yes. They're pretty excellent." (from counter-challenging to aligning)*

The data shows that the Dean used challenging and directing to respond to counter-challenging (addressing the issue directly) and sense-managing (moving the meeting on). Interestingly I also found a pattern where a higher level of 'wrangling' in one or a series of meetings was followed by a Driving meeting. From my observation, this appeared to provide a temporary respite from thorny implementation problems and a re-focus on the longer-term picture.

#### *5.4.2.1.9 Sense-managing – agenda setting (change leader)*

Sense-managing refers to the control of the meeting process by the Dean through Chairing the meeting (curtailing, closing) but also to agenda setting which shaped a driving or detecting meeting. Detecting meetings were noticeable for their consistency. Where changes occurred they appeared to have the effect of increasing the level of detecting i.e. gaining greater depth of insight into the progress of change implementation on the ground. Two particular examples were firstly, reversing the order of speakers. This gave greater focus on areas that, because they usually went last, were often rather rushed and also, from an egalitarian perspective, appeared to counter the sense that some areas were less important. The second change was more radical. As the Area meetings became established it was clear that the Marketing & Recruitment Area meeting was not operating well and had low attendance. After a number of months of allowing the Marketing Head to manage the situation the Dean stepped in. The three Marketing reps (one for each School) were asked to attend the start of FMG to report on their recruitment numbers. The Dean asked probing questions (sense-challenging) but also praised their suggestions for improving recruitment (sense-building) and explained to them the importance of particular measures and the way they were used by the Executive team to judge the faculty and make decisions about budgets and cost cutting (sense-directing). The Marketing reps attended each month for three months and this resulted in demonstrable improvements in their grasp of the figures and in the performance of the Marketing area meetings.

#### *5.4.2.1.10 Sense-limiting (recipient response)*

I use the term sense-limiting in reference to any apparent attempt by FMG to limit the Dean's ability to sense-manage them, for example, by not attending, leaving early, not completing an area report, not answering a question by changing the subject. In this case study this only happened occasionally, again reflecting what appeared to be an overall acceptance of the Dean's authority and plan or a reluctance to challenge it but also reflecting the nature of the playing field. The design of the meetings structure meant that non attendance was difficult as Wednesday was a designated faculty day when everyone had been told to be in the office, which was

close to the meeting room, and even if absent, FMG members were expected to submit an area report and template that could be reviewed in absentia.

#### *5.4.2.2 Sense-monitoring*

Sense-monitoring refers to the Dean's sensemaking after the meeting and includes reflecting on the previous meeting and gathering new information from other sources such as meetings with the executive team. Sense-monitoring refers to the way that the Dean appeared to draw on these sources in determining the nature of the next FMG meeting. The most common or default format was the detecting meeting which, as we have seen, enabled the Dean to using sense-building, directing and challenging to track the implementation of the deliberate change and guide people in making progress. From the patterns in the data it seems that if the Dean, through his sense-monitoring, determined that the team was becoming too focussed on immediate change implementation issues, or that people had the time, without becoming overloaded, to take on more change then a driving form was adopted.

Reflection on the previous meeting included the content of the meeting and also reflecting on the level of counter-challenging in the meeting, especially 'wrangling'. I identified a pattern where meetings with higher levels of 'wrangling' were followed by a driving meeting. For example, a meeting which involved complaints by FMG about the lack of basic facilities at the start of term such as teaching rooms without projectors or even tables and chairs was followed by a driving meeting. In the driving meeting, the Dean asked School Heads to focus their area reports on their cross-faculty role (quality, research, learning and teaching) rather than their school role. The nature of discussion became more forward-looking (what people were going to do and not the problems they were experiencing right now) and the sensegiving favoured disclosing and aligning rather than counter-challenging. The Dean also used information from the executive group or other parts of the university to inform Chair's Announcements and external news from competitors or partnerships.

> *Dean Chairs Announcements: "I was sitting in on Executive Group this morning. Obviously, a lot of concentration is on the [external audit] coming in a couple of weeks' time but also just on the fact that everybody's minds have now turned, as I can see, towards the…"*

Executive level information was used in meetings with a driving format such as an

extraordinary meeting before the Dean went on leave in which he discussed the faculty's position on an executive issue which could significantly impact student recruitment. At the start of the year there was a driving meeting where the Dean talked FMG through a presentation he had recently made to the Board of Governors and discussed their response.

*Dean: "The governors liked that. That was important."*

The Dean also used information from external sources to inform the next meeting. Chair's Announcements included stories about the faculty from the trade press for example. Some driving meetings appeared to be inspired by external sources such as partners or external contacts. For example, during a discussion of whether to re-launch a heritage brand the Dean noted that he was influenced by comments about the quality of work in the summer exhibition and conversations with people outside the university.

*Dean: "I got a lot comments in all sorts of different directions but one of the comments was for how strong the furniture [exhibition] was …everywhere I go now externally the ability we have to make things and that we have these craft disciplines is always highlighted… so pushing hard to strengthen it really, not at the expense of anything else but just if we can we will."*

The main source of information from inside the faculty was through the FMG meetings which, in line with the Dean's rule, 'Provide Structure yet autonomy', was the main forum for discussing the change. The Minutes of the new School and Area Meetings were available on the Monday before FMG. The main items that shaped the agenda from inside the faculty were from issues that the Dean was leading himself such as a driving meeting where the in-house architects presented the next phase of estates changes to FMG.

#### *5.4.2.3 Driving Meetings*

Whilst Detecting meetings were noticeable for their consistency and were the most common form of meeting, Driving meetings were noticeable for their novelty. Typically, significant new changes which often involved more work load for FMG staff were introduced e.g. short course meeting or the re-launch of the heritage brand or after the senior restructure, or a refocus on strategic aspects of the existing changes (focus on cross-faculty roles), after wrangling meetings, or during the summer when

people might be inclined to take their foot off the gas (building site visit, meetings before Dean went on leave). The driving meetings had an increased sense of novelty and therefore of occasion and, I observed, mainly from the language used by the Dean and recipients, that the tone of the meeting appeared to be more upbeat and uplifting. From patterns in the meetings data it appeared that driving meetings occurred when the Dean felt the team needed, or had time for, fresh input in terms of new elements of change or an opportunity to think more strategically about the change. For example, they were more prevalent during quieter periods of the academic year when there were less students and less teaching but occurred at other times, for example, following a period of wrangling or to underline a significant moment in the change process, such as, following the senior restructure.

Sense-managing refers to activites undertaken to set up a meeting with a driving form by making changes to the agenda. Typically driving meetings had additional agenda items at the start or end of the meeting or the nature of area reporting was changed. The format of the meeting with Minute & action Review, Chairs Announcements and Area reports was usually retained and the overall length of the meeting stayed the same but area reporting was completed more rapidly (with more sense-managing by the Dean i.e. curtailing and closing and less sense-challenging) which allowed more time for additional agenda items. Typical examples of agenda items included a session at the end of a meeting to brainstorm the new short course portfolio, a presentation at the start of the year (and the first meeting attended by a new School Head) looking back on key events that the Dean considered to be the successes of the last year and focussing on priorities for the coming year, a presentation leading to a debate about whether to re-launch a heritage brand and another about the layout for the new phase of estates development. These presentations were made by the Dean or invited attendees (who presented at the start of the meeting and then left) or a member of FMG who had been asked by the Dean to present. At the end of one driving meeting the Dean took the team over to see the progress of the Estates changes. Other changes included asking the School Heads to report on their cross-faculty role (research, learning and teaching, quality). An additional FMG meeting, with a driving format, which replaced the School and Area meetings, occurred shortly before the Dean went on annual leave in the

summer of 2012 and again in 2013. After the senior restructure was announced, the entire FMG meeting agenda was changed to focus on a list of key next steps that the Dean had circulated by email.

The balance of different types of sensegiving changed in a driving meeting consistent with their different purpose and this, along with the general novelty and content, helps to explain why they were more upbeat. Driving meetings contained significantly less sense-challenging (the most uncomfortable form of sensegiving which includes ordering, interrogating and persuading to do something differently) and the Dean would remind people that he wanted to get through the Area reporting part of the meeting quickly and create time for the novel part of the meeting. There was more sense-building, where the Dean encouraged people, praised them, reassured them or requested their thoughts and ideas on a topic, for example, the short courses brainstorming session and the heritage brand review. There was more sense-directing about what was happening, what something meant (focusing, explaining) and this tended to be at a more strategic level, such as, the updating of the faculty business plan rather than a micro-managing level of telling them to add attendance monitoring to their School meeting agenda.

#### *5.4.2.3.1 Mavericking*

In both driving and detecting meetings the main recipient responses were sense-aligning (showing support) and sense-disclosing (sharing information). However, this was more so in driving meetings and, perhaps because there was less sense-challenging by the Dean, there was similarly less sense-counter-challenging by FMG. Counter-challenging in response to sense-challenging tended to be more forceful. In driving meetings counter-challenging tended to be in response to sense-directing and sense-building and was less frequent and took on the softer form. It tended to be individuals rather than groups, perhaps one person with a particular issue to vent that related just to their area and not across the faculty. I called this ‘mavericking’ as it involved one person and, at its strongest, contrasted with the overall tone of the meeting.

> *FMG Member: “Just a very small detail to raise is I think the staff are hugely under pressure in every kind…The stress and administration I think has affected elsewhere…”*

As in detecting meetings, the Dean tended to address individual counter-challenging by either directly addressing the issue within the meeting or moving on (curtailing, closing).

After a Driving meeting the process of sense-monitoring took place again to reflect on the meeting and determine whether the next one would have a driving or detecting form and the fortnightly cycle described in the process diagram (Figure 5-2) continued.

#### *5.4.2.4 Recipient Rules*

The dominance of sense-aligning and sense-disclosing by FMG seemed unusual for academics that have pluralistic and competing goals and vested interests, for example, as ongoing researchers, practitioners, lecturers with their own teaching as well as school head and faculty roles. I identified underlying rules which appeared to shape the FMG members thinking about whether to comply with the process and content of the meeting or whether to push-back. The first principle that explains compliance with the Dean is 'high leader competence'. FMG members, from the former Architecture team, appear to comply with the meeting process because of established loyalty. Many have known the Dean a long time and acknowledge that he is a dynamic and visionary leader. Both Art and Architecture acknowledge his management and communication skills with any level of stakeholder such as student, staff, Executive or external. The Art and Design members also acknowledge his competence as a very stark contrast to the previous management (a sort of 'white knight' role).

*Architecture: "I've known [the Dean] since I was…a student and I think he had just graduated and started teaching roughly at the time I arrive... he's one person I've always known."*
*Art: "so people suddenly then you know rallied behind him because he came, he met people."*
*Art: "let the Dean do his magic."*

There is also evidence to suggest that FMG comply with meetings because of a 'need to feel secure'. This applies more to Art and Design where there was a real risk of faculty closure and people said they thought all the new FMG jobs might go to people from the Architecture team. FMG also seem to push back more when the area they manage is directly under threat, for example, a building closure that could

lead to less space or the threat of closure of courses with low NSS scores.

*Art: "definitely I went into that application process absolutely ignorant of [the Dean's] intent and so was more uncertain than I've ever been in any job interview."*

Alongside a need for security is a 'need to feel respected'. FMG from both Art and Design and Architecture seem to push back more when they feel an absence of respect. This includes counter-challenging unreasonable work load pressure or lack of basic administration support that left the team spending a lot of time on very menial activities, or in responding to comments by the Dean that are seen as put downs.

*Art: "I kind of understand why he did that but he didn't give us any period of recovery and he made us do it before Easter and he tried to mess with our annual leave and stuff like that."*
*Architecture: "I think it's the professional touch that is missing more than the, as in the professional kudos type, as in, 'I respect you, I recognise you'."*

The final rule I identified is that, 'change does not involve significant negative impact on staff or students'. There are examples of push back when the change process results in perceived or actual significant negative impact on staff or students such that people begin to express doubt about the plan itself or the way it is being implemented. This applies in a small way for Architecture, for example, they push back more when the Dean gets very legalistic and wants to send staff disciplinary letters to ensure they comply with certain changes. This may reflect concerns about the way the change is being implemented rather than the change itself. This rule is more apparent for FMG members in the Art and Design area where many of the changes, to curriculum for example, have been long-established in an Architecture context but are now being applied in an Art context. It is evident that the first phase of estates changes impacts Art more, resulting in chaos for staff and students and making the change very hard for FMG to manage and to sell to their teams.

*Art: "It's non-negotiable. It would cause complete chaos with student experience. There are students who have been told that this is the key part of their offer. We cannot cancel the show."*
*Art: "the ongoing reality of still not having furniture and projectors and all of the day to day activities that are now, I truly believe, starting to affect the staff's confidence in faculty management group being able to resolve things in a timely manner."*

In the process diagram (Figure 5-2) I show these rules influencing the recipient response in both driving and detecting meetings with compliance with the rules leading to more aligning and disclosing, and non-compliance leading to more counter-challenging and sense-limiting.

## 5.5 Discussion

Figure 5-2 summarises my research findings on how senior executives sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving in change management meetings. I find that this is done by establishing and managing the playing field. Establishing is important for creating a team and developing rules, but more critical is the managing of the field through particular types of sensegiving and sensemaking activity. The sensegiving consists of 4 types of activities: building, challenging, directing and managing. These are used to keep individuals focussed on the end goals and objectives. Furthermore they combine into two patterns to do with driving and detecting. The sensemaking is to do with sense-monitoring and this then informs the nature of the sensegiving. A key component of the sensemaking is how the leader makes sense of the recipient sensegiving in meetings in response to his sensegiving. He uses the responses to decide on where and how he next needs to take action. I find managers can connect the formulation of strategy to its implementation and therefore deliver and sustain change in an organisation by creating a series of driving and detecting meetings, where the detecting meetings are used to track the change progress and the driving meetings are used to introduce new change and (re-)focus the team on strategic level thinking. These meetings are important opportunities for sensegiving, enabling the leader to provide both direction and support. Through a sequential set of driving and detecting meetings, designed in response to where others are in terms of the change goals and targets, a leader can move people through a change process.

These findings enable me to make a number of contributions to strategy research. My first contribution is the identification of the process captured in Figure 5-2 through which senior executives can sustain strategic change implementation over time through their sensemaking and sensegiving in meetings, leading to a preferred organisational reality in line with the change leaders initial planned intent. Second the model extends understanding of the notion of sensegiving competence (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Rouleau and Balogun 2011) through identification of the need for a sensegiving system which captures framing and influencing skills, through discourse and other symbolic actions, but also the processual skills that enable the setting up of sensegiving fora and opportunities, here captured in sense-managing,

sense-building, sense-directing and sense-challenging. Finally, I contribute more generally to Strategy as Practice literature on strategic episodes and meetings, responding to the call for greater understanding of the role of strategic episodes over time.

### *5.5.1 Sustaining Strategic Change*

The first contribution is the process model that accounts for how top managers can sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving. Early studies established the importance of change leader sensegiving, particularly during the initiation phase of strategic change (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994). Although there are still relatively few studies in this area, later work has begun to explore sensegiving during implementation as well as initiation of change and provides evidence that leader sensegiving continues to be important during the implementation phase (for example, Bartunek et al. 1999; Kezar 2013; Lundgren-Henriksson and Kock 2016; Stensaker and Falkenberg 2007). This is unsurprising as we know that change recipients may interpret change in unexpected ways that are not in line with the change leaders intent and can be detrimental to change outcomes (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Mantere et al. 2012; Sonenshein 2010). However, few studies, in fact none that I have thus far identified, offer a process model that accounts for how change leaders can use sensegiving to sustain alignment between recipients' sensemaking and their own, not only in the initial phases of strategy initiation, but over time through the complex and often precarious process of change implementation. Indeed other studies provide more evidence for why sustained leader sensegiving frequently does not happen. For example, in Balogun and Johnson (2004) and Stensaker and Falkenberg (2007) geographically distant, corporate level, executives delegate strategic change initiatives to business unit level managers to implement with limited ongoing, face to face interaction. Similarly, Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) found that leaders are often busy with day to day problems and have little time or energy left for effective sensegiving activity.

Beyond showing how meetings can afford the opportunity for more frequent sensegiving attempts, the model identifies detailed sensemaking and sensegiving

activities and processes that enable top managers to sustain change in an intended direction. Key to the success of the sensemaking and sensegiving is a sense-monitoring process. The establishment of a system with rules, such as 'no dark corners', provides the Dean with context rich and timely information about the change process, both from outside and within the meeting. This information informs his sensemaking and helps him to perceive or predict 'sensegiving gaps' (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007) between recipient sensemaking and his preferred organisational reality and to tailor the next meeting accordingly. The Dean was able to alter the tempo of the meeting to suit his sensegiving needs through a pattern of driving and detecting meetings. For example, creating a more strategic, forward looking agenda to encourage people to 'look over the top of the hill', or using a detecting format to delve into the minutiae of the change and to influence recipient sensemaking at a more detailed level. Within these different formats we see how different patterns of sense-building, challenging, directing and managing shape recipient response. For example, like is often met with like and when the Dean decreases the level of sense-challenging, recipients similarly reduce the frequency and intensity of counter-challenging.

### *5.5.2 Sensegiving Competence*

Second, the model also contributes to understanding of sensegiving competence through the identification of a sensegiving system and the skills required to set-up, utilise and sustain it over time. Studies have tended to focus on the discursive elements of sensegiving (Bartunek et al. 1999; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Monin et al. 2013; Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). Maitlis and Christianson (2014) use the term 'discursive' to refer to both written and spoken words, to different types of language such as metaphor, as well as conversations and narratives, accounts or stories that people tell. However, a small number of studies (for example, Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Rouleau and Balogun 2011) have in addition drawn attention to the capabilities required to create opportunities for discursive sensegiving. Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) distinguish between discursive sensegiving ability, being able to develop and articulate persuasive accounts, and 'process facilitators': routines and practices such as meetings that enable sensegiving opportunities. In Rouleau and Balogun (2011) sensegiving skill involves

creating the right moment to sensegive through ‘setting the scene’ as well as choosing the right words. Rouleau and Balogun (2011) use the term ‘discursive competence’ rather than ‘discursive ability’ (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007) to capture the fact that skilful influencing goes beyond the language used and includes the craft of strategic sensemaking through finely-grained understanding of the context.

Whilst these studies have hinted at the importance of sensegiving competence that extends beyond the spoken word, my research is able to advance these findings by showing how these elements hold together to create a sensegiving system, which is captured here as ‘establishing’ and ‘managing the playing field’ but within which there are the ‘driving and detecting meetings’ and different types of activities such as sense-managing, sense-building, sense-directing and sense-challenging. These findings arise from the fact that my intensive observation of meetings enabled a closeness to the sensegiving activity of an individual which is missing in prior studies. Rouleau and Balogun (2011), for example, draw on recollections of sensegiving attempts from interview and focus group data whilst Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) observe various meetings across three orchestras. However, neither study involves a close analysis of the actual words spoken, nor the way a particular meeting evolves over time. In particular I demonstrate that ‘establishing’ and ‘managing the playing field’ are a longitudinal series of events that underpin the sensegiving process and enable the senior executive to influence the sensemaking of others over time. The sensegiving system, encompassing framing and influencing skills, through discourse and other symbolic actions, but also the processual skills that enable the setting up of sensegiving fora and opportunities, provides the change leader with rich and relevant contextual information (sense-monitoring) to inform his sensemaking and create timely opportunities for sensegiving. This leader appeared to be skilled in establishing and managing the playing field i.e. knowing when to drive and when to detect, when to chasten and upbraid and push, and when to introduce something new to keep the change process going.

In sense-managing I show that sensegiving competence includes both processual skill, such as shaping the agenda and determining the format of the next meeting, but also discursive skill through moving the meeting on and curtailing conversations

to create openings within the meeting to speak. In this sense, the skill identified here complements Rouleau and Balogun's (2011) notion of scene setting. It also extends the concept of sensegiving competence to include a capability to manage meetings. It involves an ability to sense-read in terms listening to the way that recipients are responding, and determine the type of sensegiving that is appropriate and the ability to constantly connect to a high level change agenda. In this sense, it highlights the skill of sensewrighting and sense reading (Mangham and Pye 1991) captured in discursive competence, but also amplifies the additional skill of sense-relating (Mangham and Pye 1991).

My findings also add to understanding of the craft or skill of sensegiving as a discursive ability (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). Rouleau (2005), for example, demonstrates the role of both semantic tacit knowledge, and knowledge of the local socio-cultural context, in effective discursive sensegiving. Monin et al. (2013) identify three types of sensegiving: sensebreaking, sense-specification, and sense-hiding and three types of recipient response: acceptance, resistance, and distancing. There are differences between these findings and my research which reflect the different contexts. For example, in my study sensegiving in meetings happens in a small room, face-to-face environment, thus sense-building (encouraging) and challenging (redirecting) reflect a close-to and interactive form of leader sensegiving. Sense-hiding (Monin et al. 2013), the avoidance of particular words or alternatives discourses, may reflect a more organisation-wide analysis of sensegiving, drawn from documents and interviews rather than observation of discursive interaction between a change leader and his management team. In my study sense-hiding was evident at the organisational level where the Dean stayed 'on message' and only promoted accounts of the merger progress which he considered positive or good news stories, whilst in the meetings he was more open. However, there are also similarities, such as sense-specification, the providing of specific meanings (Monin et al. 2013) which resonates with sense-directing in my study. This suggests that there is a common need for leaders to provide clarity, a clear steer that goes beyond vague or ambiguous statements, in order to influence meaning making in merger and post-merger contexts. Monin et al. (2013) consider recipient sensemaking and, in doing so, both studies respond to calls to examine the interplay between leader

sensegiving and recipient response (Bartunek et al. 1999; Sonenshein 2010). However, my study goes further in exploring dynamic patterns between the different types of sensegiving. For example, the way that the driving or detecting meeting lead to changes in the type of sensegiving and the impact on recipient response i.e. the level of sense-aligning, disclosing, counter-challenging, limiting and wrangling or mavericking.

### *5.5.3 Strategy Meetings*

Third, I contribute more generally to Strategy as Practice (SAP) studies of strategic episodes and meetings. Research in the SAP tradition has tended to treat meetings as discrete events and focus on discursive strategies within a single meeting or part thereof (Kwon et al. 2014; Samra-Fredericks 2003; Whittle et al. 2015). In this study I respond to the call for greater understanding of the role of strategic episodes over time (Vaara and Whittington 2012). For example, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) studied a range of different strategy meetings from a practice perspective across three universities and show how practices include the structuring of meetings to influence the strategy debate and how the leader exercises authority through practices to do with agenda setting and chairing. My paper extends this by examining occurrences of the same meeting over time and the patterns of 'detecting' and 'driving' in these meetings that help to sustain the intended strategic change. I add to knowledge of the practice through which change leaders manage meetings by 'creating the rules' and deliberately and intentionally designing a meeting system and practices that align with those rules. In addition, I move beyond practices to do with sense managing (chairing, agendas) to show the relevance of patterns of sense challenging, building and directing.

Johnson et al. (2010) consider the ceremonial nature of strategy workshops which suspend everyday work routines. I extend their work by contrasting it with meetings which re-occur over time and remain closely connected to everyday activities. Detecting meetings, in particular, were noticeable for their formality and consistency over time which supports Johnson et al.'s (2010) proposition that continuity meetings require a more grounded agenda (liturgy) and greater structure in terms of hierarchy and formalised behaviour. My findings also support Johnson et al.'s (2010) view that managers deliberately design workshops or meetings through the manipulation of

'removal', 'liturgy' and 'specialists'. In my case 'liturgy' (agenda) was the strongest lever and was used to move between a driving and detecting meeting format. 'Removal' was less apparent and was more social than geographical – a meeting of 'FMG members', a restricted and therefore symbolically 'privileged' group. However, Johnson et al. (2010) argue that the liturgy itself is a form of removal in that participants discuss issues that are outside the everyday. Removal and liturgy give rise to 'liminality' of which a key element is 'communitas' which describes energy and group-relatedness of the episode (Johnson et al. 2010). Johnson et al. (2010) argue that 'communitas' can increase engagement in discussions but could also lead to too much disconnection from the mundane everyday. My findings extend their work by showing that through 'sense-managing' the Dean was able to sustain the deliberate change by making relatively small changes in the liturgy (agenda of driving meetings) that raised the level of 'communitas' enough to reenergise and re-focus the team, but without inviting too much new or unrealistic thinking. Further research is needed on the role of regular meetings in the strategy process given that, even with low levels of removal, the Dean was able to re-create much of the energy of an off-site workshop just through small liturgy changes that provided novelty and inspiration, particularly when contrasted with the consistency of the detecting format.

### 5.6 Boundary Conditions

This study has developed theory about how senior executives use sensemaking and sensegiving in change management meetings to sustain strategic change initiatives over time. Only one site has been studied and in one particular context, an internal university merger. Thus questions exist about the extent to which this study is more widely generalisable. First, it is not clear whether the same process would be applicable to different types of strategic change, such as spin-off or rapid global expansion. Another noticeable factor in this type of change is that it is deliberate and the change leader has a clear plan from the outset, thus enabling him to steer and guide others along a path which he sees reasonably clearly in his own mind. It is possible that a strategic change that was more emergent in nature, such as a response to unfolding external market events, might make it more difficult for one person to shepherd others through a change and to anticipate when driving or detecting meetings are needed. In this case, a more consensual and less directive

approach might be appropriate. Also, the context involves the Dean working in close proximity with managers who he has come to know over time, or in the case of Art & Design, more recently through the consultation and 'harmonisation' period. Skill in 'shaping the team', in knowing when driving meetings are needed, in skilful sense-building, direction and challenging, and in meeting recipient rules such as 'high leader competence' and 'feeling secure and respected' might be partially dependent on close working relationships and more difficult over distance or with a new team. The types of sensegiving identified i.e. sense-building, challenging, directing and managing may also reflect, in part, the close-to nature of the interaction with recipients that occurs in a meeting environment.

The process I have identified is context sensitive so, whilst the concepts 'creating the rules' and 'shaping the team' which form part of 'establishing the playing field' could apply in many settings, the exact nature of the team and the rules will differ depending on the context. For example, in this particular context the Dean has the ability to select his own team and is keen to 'choose people with vision'. This is similar for the concept 'recipient rules' where, in this specific context, recipients' evaluation of the leader's competence is important and is generally high. The process model contributes to existing knowledge by explaining how top managers can sustain strategic change through sensegiving in meetings over time. However, in highlighting that situation-specific 'rules' impact the exact shape of the process and its effectiveness, the model also provokes questions about context that will assist in transferring and adapting the process to another setting.

The study refers to a modern UK university. In such institutions, meetings are considered a common and accepted form of control and communication (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 1994; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008). In other settings meetings may be considered outmoded or, despite the best efforts of the change leader, attendance might not be high, thus reducing the change leader's ability to 'manage the playing field' and sustain the change process. On the other hand, similarities with existing studies suggest the findings may be more widely generalisable. For example, other studies of strategic change point to the importance of leader sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007).

Similarly, other studies of meetings show how they are used by leaders to exercise authority (Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008) and to create energy for change (Johnson et al. 2010). However, my study goes further in showing how different types of sensegiving and different types of meetings can operate as a process over time which drives and sustains the implementation of a strategic change.

### 5.7 Future Research

This research uses intensive observation of meetings over time to consider what senior executives actually do in meetings to direct understanding. In doing so I respond to SAP calls for close observation of what strategy practitioners actually do (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2007); for analysis of strategic episodes over time (Hendry and Seidl 2003; Vaara and Whittington 2012), and for a renewed focus on top managers and their skills (Balogun et al. 2015; Balogun et al. 2016). Having demonstrated the value of such research, for example in identifying a system for senior executive sensegiving, future research might adopt a similar approach. For example, studies might explore how strategic change implementation is sustained in a different change context and observe what role, if any, meetings play in sustaining the process and how leader sensegiving occurs. This might be a different type of deliberate change such as a clearly planned expansion, or a more emergent context, such as responding to market turbulence. Research might also consider the role of meetings more generally in strategic change, for example, considering the different types of change leader sensegiving that occur, the format of regular meetings and whether this is consistent over time or changes, and the different role played by ad-hoc meetings such as strategy workshops compared with regular meetings. Research might also consider the different ways that meetings are used for strategic change in very different contexts such as virtual meetings in global or dispersed organisations, or consider what alternatives there are to meetings as a vehicle for leader sensegiving during strategic change in organisations that see meetings as pointless or outdated, perhaps by studying more recently established firms.

### 5.8 Conclusions and Implications for Practice

This study aimed to contribute to knowledge about how senior executives sustain strategic change initiatives over time. I used a sensemaking perspective to answer

this question and concluded that the change leader used sensegiving in management meetings to sustain the change. I developed a process model of how the change leader used the meetings to sustain the change which incorporates both change leader sensegiving and recipient response. I concluded that change was sustained through a process of 'establishing the field' and 'managing the field' which involved different types of meetings, either driving or detecting, and different types of sensegiving within the meetings. These findings also have implications for practice. The findings suggest that change leaders should give close consideration, at the early stage of strategic change, to how they will provide sustaining leader sensegiving throughout the change implementation. Meetings can be an effective vehicle for sustained leader sensegiving. However, managers should be mindful of establishing the purpose or 'rules' of the meetings such as how they will operate and who will attend. An important element is to ensure that the people attending the meeting have a comprehensive and up to date view of the progress of the change, which they are willing to share openly, and they are willing to be directed by the change leader to take action, for example, if change is behind schedule. It is also important that meetings occur regularly and are well attended. However, people may well find the meetings tiresome and difficult and they may be unwilling to attend, especially when there is a high volume of change and people are very busy. In order to maximise attendance, engagement and meeting effectiveness, the change leader needs to be skilful in different types of sensegiving, such as sense-building and encouraging others, and sense-managing, such as effective chairing of the meeting and role modelling high attendance, punctuality, openness and brevity. Skill in sense-monitoring is also needed to determine when people need re-energising or refocusing, when they are able to take on more change, or when they need to put aside the detail to take a more strategic view, and to then design a novel intervention, such as occurs in a meeting with a 'driving' format.

# Chapter 6: Organisational Identity

## 6.1 Introduction

Organisational identity is a cognitive lens which influences how organisational members interpret their environment and shapes 'strategising' activities and actions (Oliver 2015). As such, it is increasingly recognised that organisational identity can be central to strategic change in organisations (Gioia et al. 2013b; Nag et al. 2007; Ravasi and Phillips 2011). Albert and Whetten (1985) define organisational identity as features of the organisation that are central, distinctive and endure over time. However, since then others have argued that organisational identity is more dynamic and can shift over relatively short timescales (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Gioia et al. 2000; Gioia and Thomas 1996). Research from this 'dynamic perspective' (Gioia et al. 2013b) has shown that organisational identity change occurs during strategic change such as merger or spin-off (Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Mantere et al. 2012). Identity issues are also triggered when there is a mismatch between current organisational identity and construed external image (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Dutton et al. 1994; Elsbach and Kramer 1996; Ravasi and Schultz 2006), or between current organisational identity and an aspired identity (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996). Thus organisational identity can be central to processes of strategic change as senior executives seek to introduce a new strategic direction with new purpose, goals and mission.

Corley and Gioia (2004) demonstrate that identity change can occur in two ways: through labels-based change or through cognitive level changes to meanings underlying identity labels. Studies explore how identity change takes on different forms depending on whether it is at the level of labels or meanings or both. Many of these studies adopt a sensemaking perspective (Ashforth et al. 2011; Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Mantere et al. 2012; Pratt 2000; Ravasi and Schultz 2006) focussing on organisational identity change as a process involving members in the re-negotiation of shared meanings and the revision of interpretations about 'who we are as an organisation' (Gioia et al. 2010; Ravasi and Schultz 2006). In particular, there is a concern to understand how the cognitive level changes to meanings underlying identity labels occurs through a focus on processes of leader sensemaking and sensegiving. As a result we know

that organisational identity change is a complex process, occurring through the interplay between leader claims and member understandings, yet “laden with uncertainty and ambiguity” (Clark et al. 2010:400).

In many existing studies of identity change (for example Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Mantere et al. 2012) identity only emerges as a concern part-way through a strategic change process. Although the strategic change is intentional, identity issues are not initially a concern or a focus of senior executive attention. However, there are a small number of studies where change leaders appear mindful of identity issues from the outset and begin with the deliberate intention of crafting a change in organisational identity (Fiol 2002; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006). However, with the exception of Fiol (2002), these studies do not focus on both recipient responses and change leader sensegiving to understand what of the change leaders actions are significant to any change that occurs. Thus these studies leave us knowing little about how change leaders can deliberately facilitate a planned change in organisational identity. In this study, therefore, I focus on how change leaders can facilitate intentional organisation identity change.

My research examines a significant change event, which we know from existing research will prompt issues of identity (Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Mantere et al. 2012; Nag et al. 2007). I focus on an internal merger between an Art & Design faculty and an Architecture faculty, with different histories and different historical identities consistent with the diversity that often exists between faculties in universities. In contrast to other merger studies exploring identity change, but consistent with those by Fiol (2002), Gioia and Thomas (1996) and Ravasi and Phillips (2011), the Dean put in charge of the merger appeared mindful of the identity issues from the outset, setting out a desired future identity for the merged organisation that drew on shared values of ‘making’ and ‘social engagement’. Thus the change process involved an element of intentionality in the focus on identity change, with explicit new labels set out up front.

Consistent with other studies of identity change I adopt a sensemaking perspective to explore the sensegiving of the Dean as he attempts to create a new entity that delivers against his future identity, and how this facilitates the sensemaking of others

in a way that encourages them (or not) to adopt new meanings consistent with this identity. I focus on the 'strategising' work of the Dean which is consistent with a Strategy as Practice (SAP) approach which fosters understanding of strategy practitioners and what they do (Dittrich et al. 2015; Oliver 2015). I also explore the recipient responses to understand how what the Dean does facilitates the process of identity change. Thus I explore the identity change process through a dual focus on the Dean's identity claims and the recipients' meaning making. In addition, building on existing research which has largely focussed on discursive practices of sensemaking and sensegiving in identity change, I pick up on the small number of studies which also reveal other interventions to facilitate the identity change process, including buildings and physical settings (Gioia et al. 2010), material artefacts more generally (Gioia et al. 1994; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Stigliani and Ravasi 2012) and work practices (Nag et al. 2007; Ravasi and Schultz 2006).

I identify a process model of intentional organisational identity change that shows it to occur through a process of three sequential phases of 'developing and promoting new claims', 'building new claims' and 'living the claims'. These findings make a number of contributions to what we know about organisational identity change. First, the nature of the phasing suggests a particular pattern in which new claims are developed and communicated discursively, and then a process is put in place which facilitates the development of meanings which moves beyond the discursive to also include material and work practice interventions. Second, I identify differences in how labels-based and meaning-based identity change occurs. In the first labels based change phase, the developing and promoting of new claims or labels centres on a discursive process whilst, in the subsequent phases, attaching meanings to claims moves beyond a discursive process to also include material and work practice interventions. Third, I show how close management involvement in sensegiving can direct recipient sensemaking over time and helps to drive through the identity change as it was originally designed and intended. Fourth, I identify a lesser role for ambiguity than in other studies as ambiguity helped to give early claims a broad appeal but did not play a role in the attachment of meanings. Fifth, I also contribute more generally to studies of sensemaking and change, identifying differences in the role of materiality during labels-based and meanings-based change.

## 6.2 Theoretical Background

The concept of organisational identity concerns the character of the organisation and the elements that members see as central, enduring, and distinctive, that shape how they define the organisation (Albert and Whetten 1985). Organisational identity is of interest to strategy scholars because this shared understanding of 'who we are' as an organisation has a significant influence on strategy practice, for example on issue interpretation and strategic choice (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996). Gioia et al. (2013b) recognise a central debate in the organisational identity literature between an 'enduring' perspective which views identity as relatively stable over time and a 'dynamic' perspective which see it as more changeable. Research within this dynamic tradition builds on early studies which see identity change as a cognitive process and observe that identity can change, for example, because a change in external image can alter internal perceptions of the organisation (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996). This work draws on theories of social construction which view organisational identity as a residing in members shared understandings about the central features of the organisation (Gioia et al. 2000). Identity change can occur as these shared understandings between members undergo periodic renegotiation in response to different stimuli (Ravasi and Schultz 2006). Ravasi and Schultz (2006) argue that the alternative social actor perspective sees organisation identity as more enduring, providing members with a set of deeply held beliefs that are difficult to change. From this perspective, organisational identity resides in institutional commitments or claims by organisational leaders that attempt to position it within a particular social category (Gioia et al. 2010). Whilst Ravasi and Schultz see the two perspectives as complementary, Gioia et al. (2010) find the two perspectives to be 'mutually constitutive'. They find that claims and understandings are recursively linked, such that claims can lead to actions that deepen understandings and deeper understanding can lead to actions that change claims. However, because the social actor perspective is more attached to the non dynamic, enduring view, most research on organisation identity change adopts a social construction perspective and few existing studies speak to both (Gioia et al. 2013b; Gioia et al. 2010; Ravasi and Schultz 2006).

As a result of the focus on social constructionism in studies within the dynamic perspective, and consistent with studies of strategic change in general, many studies

of organisational identity change focus on the underlying processes of sensegiving and sensemaking involved, in an attempt to unpick the process through which the re-negotiation of shared meanings about 'who we are as an organisation' occurs (Ravasi and Schultz 2006). Organisational identity develops through the interplay between members understandings and organisational claims, thus an in-depth study must consider both elements and their interplay (Gioia et al. 2013b). This theoretical combination of both sensemaking and sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991) accounts for the frequent adoption of a sensemaking perspective (see, for example Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Howard-Grenville et al. 2013; Mantere et al. 2012). It provides a means of understanding both leader claims and member understandings and their interplay (Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006).

Studies on organisational identity change focus on change contexts which are known to raise identity issues. This includes strategic change events such as merger or spin-off (Albert and Whetten 1985). As a result, studies have explored organisation identity change in many such contexts such as organisational start up (Gioia et al. 2010), corporate spin-off (Corley and Gioia 2004), and merger (Clark et al. 2010; Mantere et al. 2012). In many of these studies, however, whilst the strategic change, such as spin-off, is intentional, identity only emerges as an issue and becomes a focus of attention during the strategic change process. For example, in Clark et al. (2010) a transitional identity, 'Newco', provides an unexpected and opportune way forward as the merger process begins to stall. In Gioia et al. (2010) the faculty were 'muddling through' and did not converge on a consensual identity until the end of the process. In Corley and Gioia (2004) there was a 'meanings void' due to a lack of understanding about the organisational identity and leaders did not respond to this until the latter part of the change process.

There are only a small number of organisational identity change studies, four to my knowledge, in which change leaders appear mindful of identity issues from the outset and begin with the deliberate intention of crafting and managing an identity change (Fiol 2002; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006). For example, in Fiol (2002) the process of intentional identity transformation was initiated to create a shift in mindset from product-oriented to solutions-oriented.

Ravasi and Schultz (2006) and Ravasi and Phillips (2011) explore a deliberate attempt to develop new labels and new meanings, to link these to the organisation's historic past (Ravasi and Schultz 2006), align them with strategic investments (Ravasi and Phillips 2011) and communicate them to members and wider stakeholders. Gioia and Thomas (1996), the first empirical research on planned identity change, demonstrate that identity change can be deliberate in their study of a move to become a top 10 university.

Research suggests that identity change can involve changes to labels or meanings or both (Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Fiol 2002; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia et al. 2000; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Nag et al. 2007; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006). Gioia et al. (2000) originally suggested that identity only appeared to be enduring because labels stayed the same but in fact underlying meanings changed. Corley and Gioia (2004) developed this further by identifying a process of labels based identity change. This labels based change resulted in confusion and ambiguity which prompted and facilitated a process of meanings based change. Studies of deliberate identity change, on the other hand, suggest that both labels based change and meanings based change are needed, and that new claims tend to be set out early in the process (Fiol 2002; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006) for which new meanings are then developed. However, in these studies how meanings are developed takes on very different forms. Meanings are deliberately developed and communicated (Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006), developed emergently through individual experimentation (Fiol 2002) or deliberately left open and ambiguous to allow different interpretations (Gioia and Thomas 1996). Furthermore, these studies do not focus in detail on both the overt identity claims set out by senior change leaders and the development of members shared understandings. For example Ravasi and Phillips (2011) and Ravasi and Schultz (2006) focus on the development of claims and promotion of meanings by the top management team and have only indirect evidence of member response. Gioia and Thomas (1996) focus on the top management team and the output is a process model of sensemaking and issue interpretation rather than deliberate identity change. An exception is Fiol (2002) which explores deliberate identity change as a process of identification involving both individual and organisational level identity change. As a result, the lack of focus on

recipients' meaning making processes, in both studies with a deliberate and more emergent focus on identity change, means we know little about how identity change plays out through the dynamic interplay between senior management actions and recipient responses. We have little understanding of which of the things the senior managers are doing most has an impact in terms of the adoption of new labels and the development of new meanings.

Existing research points to the importance of ambiguity as a feature of the identity change process, for example, in promoting an appetite for leader sensegiving (Corley and Gioia 2004), or in allowing differing interpretations to co-exist where a detailed common understanding is not yet appropriate (Clark et al. 2010; Gioia et al. 2012; Gioia and Thomas 1996). Whilst there is strong evidence of the importance of ambiguity in the studies in which identity only emerges as an issue and becomes a focus of attention during the strategic change process, in studies of deliberate identity change there is less agreement on the role of ambiguity. Ambiguity of meanings is seen as facilitative of identity change in Gioia and Thomas (1996) and also in Fiol (2002) where loss of meaning allows for new possibilities (de-identification) and an ambiguous core ideology allows for continual adaption (re-identification). However, in Ravasi and Schultz (2006) and Ravasi and Phillips (2011) communication is designed to provide clarity and reduce ambiguity. Thus, particularly given the lack of a dual focus on change leader action and recipient responses, we still know little about how new labels and meanings are established during a deliberate identity change and particularly, how meanings based change occurs.

The adoption of a sensemaking perspective in studies from the dynamic perspective has contributed to understanding of discursive capability in the process of organisational identity change (Corley and Gioia 2004; Fiol 2002; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006). For example, Fiol (2002) describes rhetorical practices to support three phases of deliberate identity change and Ravasi and Schultz (2006) observe a sophisticated range of communication tools designed to deliver a consistent identity message. However, the emphasis on discursive practice in change studies adopting a sensemaking perspective has drawn criticism of both sensemaking research (Cornelissen et al. 2014; Whiteman

and Cooper 2011) and organisational identity studies (Harquail and Wilcox King 2010; Howard-Grenville et al. 2013). A small number of studies point to the role of material practices in supporting discursive and cognitive processes of collective sensemaking (Cornelissen et al. 2014; Ravasi and Schultz 2006; Stigliani and Ravasi 2012; Whiteman and Cooper 2011). Studies reveal that identity claims are more likely to be accepted if they are linked to tangible resources, such as investment in buildings which help to substantiate and realise the claims through 'material anchoring' (Gioia et al. 2010; Howard-Grenville et al. 2013; Ravasi and Phillips 2011).

In addition, existing studies reveal the potential instrumental role of both talk and action in sensegiving (Gioia et al. 1994). Corley and Gioia (2004) suggest that identity change requires both cognitive and behavioural approaches, with cognition seeming to matter more at the launch stage, whilst action is needed in order for changes to take hold. New work practices, experiences or experimental activities can take on symbolic meaning or act as sensegiving cues which influence member understandings (Fiol 2002; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia et al. 1994; Howard-Grenville et al. 2013; Nag et al. 2007; Ravasi and Schultz 2006; Whiteman and Cooper 2011). Organisational identity is constructed from shared experiences and processes of interaction (Gioia et al. 2000; Howard-Grenville et al. 2013). People give sense to others through their behaviour by role modelling and acting as identity carriers or custodians of identity (Corley and Gioia 2004; Howard-Grenville et al. 2013; Whiteman and Cooper 2011). However whilst we know little about the process, or even feasibility, of deliberate identity change, we know less still about the role of non discursive elements such as new work practices or materiality in the change process and how this may differ for labels versus meanings based change. We also know little about how every day shared experiences and interactions shape organisational identity or how a new organisational identity shapes what people do every day.

### 6.3 Research Problem

This study seeks to build on the limited studies of intentional organisational identity change to explore how such processes of change can be facilitated by change leaders, with a focus on both change leader actions and recipient responses. It does this by adopting a sensemaking perspective, and taking into account the growing

evidence that understanding identity change requires studies to move beyond a focus on the discursive actions of the senior executives leading change. This requires a strategic change context which we know to raise identity issues, such as a merger (Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010; Mantere et al. 2012), and in which the change leader is aware and working with identity issues from the outset. I ask how can senior executives intentionally drive a process of organisational identity change? How can a change leader facilitate the process through discursive, material and work practice interventions?

### 6.4 Methods

Unik (a pseudonym) is a large, post-1992[1] university. My research focuses on an internal restructure merging the Architecture faculty and Art & Design (A&D) faculty. The Architecture Dean was appointed as conjoint Dean of both faculties by the Vice Chancellor. For 25 years, Architecture had pursued a strategy of emulating top institutions and by numerous measures, e.g. external reputation, league tables, was more highly regarded than the wider University, including A&D. Through physical separation and other forms of distancing Architecture had achieved significant autonomy from the wider university and a distinct organisational identity. However, it was the smallest faculty, about one-third of the size of A&D, and not financially viable as a 'profit centre'. The merger would create a larger unit which could operate quasi-independently as a profit centre. However, the Art & Design faculty was larger and was widely regarded as poorly managed, with relatively poor overall performance and poor staff and student satisfaction. The merger was initially viewed by the Dean as something of a 'shotgun wedding' that threatened the Architecture faculty's reputation and threatened to dilute its identity through merger with this larger and more dysfunctional partner. The Dean was asked by the Vice Chancellor to undertake a three month review and consultation and present his plan for the merger to the Board of Governors. Over the three months, the Dean spent half of his time based in the Art & Design faculty where he met with staff and attended student events and began to develop his detailed plan. His plan focussed on a deliberate process of identity change that involved a move into a single shared building and the adoption by Art & Design of many of the work practices and teaching approaches found in Architecture, such as a studio system and common curriculum and

[1] polytechnic given university status in 1992

academic calendar. Whilst founded in Architecture, these changes were seen as very beneficial to wider creative disciplines and would help to develop a shared identity based on common activities and common underlying shared values. These values included a shared commitment to socially engaged forms of making and craft. The Dean argued that, over time, the changes would help to raise the standards and reputation of the Art & Design faculty and create an attractive shared identity across both faculties. This would be supported by significant investment in remodelling of the shared building to facilitate neighbourly collaboration and embody the new identity. I track the Dean's attempts to construct this shared organisation identity.

### *6.4.1 Data Collection*

My research provides a qualitative, longitudinal case study. I followed the merger in real-time over two academic years (2011/12 and 2012/13). A single exploratory case study is appropriate (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Yin 2013) as I am researching an underexplored phenomenon which requires in-depth focus to appreciate how claims are made and meanings attached. Qualitative data is an appropriate means to gain access to the worldviews of people under study (Lee 1999) and consistent with an interpretive approach which gives primacy to the voices of individuals (Van Maanen 1979). Consistent with others (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Corley and Gioia 2004) I took steps to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985) through a prolonged two-year engagement with the research site, through real-time data collection, multiple methods of data collection, and by building a thick description of the case.

Through a sensemaking perspective, I focus on the strategising work of the Dean as he seeks to implement his vision for the merged identity. This is consistent with others who argue for strategy as something people in organisations do, rather than something organisations have (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2007; Whittington 2006). I follow the Dean and what he says and does to facilitate the identity change process, and I follow the recipient responses to understand how new meanings, both consistent and inconsistent with the Dean's desired future identity for the organisation, develop. I was granted significant access to all relevant meetings and documents and conducted interviews with all members of the Faculty Management Group (FMG) and a wide range of staff within the faculty (for example, lecturers, course leaders, administrators, technicians), as well as senior levels in the

University (for example, Vice Chancellor, Finance Director, other faculty Deans). Formal visits took place at least once a week, and frequently two or three times, over the two years between October 2011 and September 2013, including regular attendance at the FMG meetings. Informal communication, through corridor conversations, dropping in to events and chats before and after meetings, was captured as field notes. The data included interviews, observation of meetings, events and collection of documents. The faculty management meeting was the main vehicle used by the Dean to discuss and manage the change and 53 of these were observed. The interviews were semi-structured and captured people's backgrounds and contextual history before focussing on their recent experiences of the merger, beginning with a prompt for significant gone wells and not gone wells. In total 105 meetings were observed and 98 interviews conducted. Meetings were audio-recorded, detailed field notes taken and documents collected. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in full.

### *6.4.2 Data Analysis*

Data Analysis began with the construction of a timeline and account of events, a chronological narrative (Pentland 1999) which was then used to develop a thick description (Langley 1999; Van Maanen 1979). Figure 6-1 shows a high level timeline of key dates.

**Figure 6-1 Timeline of Key Events**

| Timeline of Key Dates | |
|---|---|
| Pre October (Yr 0) | January - Dean three month consultation review begins<br>March - Preliminary findings presented to Board<br>June - Formal Board approval<br>*August - first meeting between researcher and Dean**<br>Curriculum changes prepared for validation<br>Live Shared Project brief seeking expressions of interest |
| October<br>(start of Academic Year 1) | *Research period commences*<br>'Harmonisation year' before formal merger August Yr1<br>First joint FMG meeting |
| March Yr1 | Management Restructure<br>New FMG co-located<br>New meetings structure |
| March Yr1 | New faculty name agreed |
| June Yr1 | End of year Summer Exhibitions<br>Works begins on Estates refurbishment |
| August Yr1 | Official launch date for newly merged faculty<br>Launch of new website |

| | |
|---|---|
| September Yr1 | Preparation for start of new academic year |
| October<br>(start of Academic Year 2) | Start of term<br>• Art & Design in refurbished location<br>• Start of Art & Design new shared curriculum and studio system |
| November Yr2 | Post Graduate Architecture students move to Art & Design building |
| May Yr2 | Cross faculty second marking and moderating |
| June Yr2 | End of year Summer Exhibitions<br>Phase 2 Estates refurbishment begins<br>Period of reflection and planning for next academic year |
| September Yr2 | *End of research period*<br>Architecture Undergraduates imminent move into Art & Design building… |

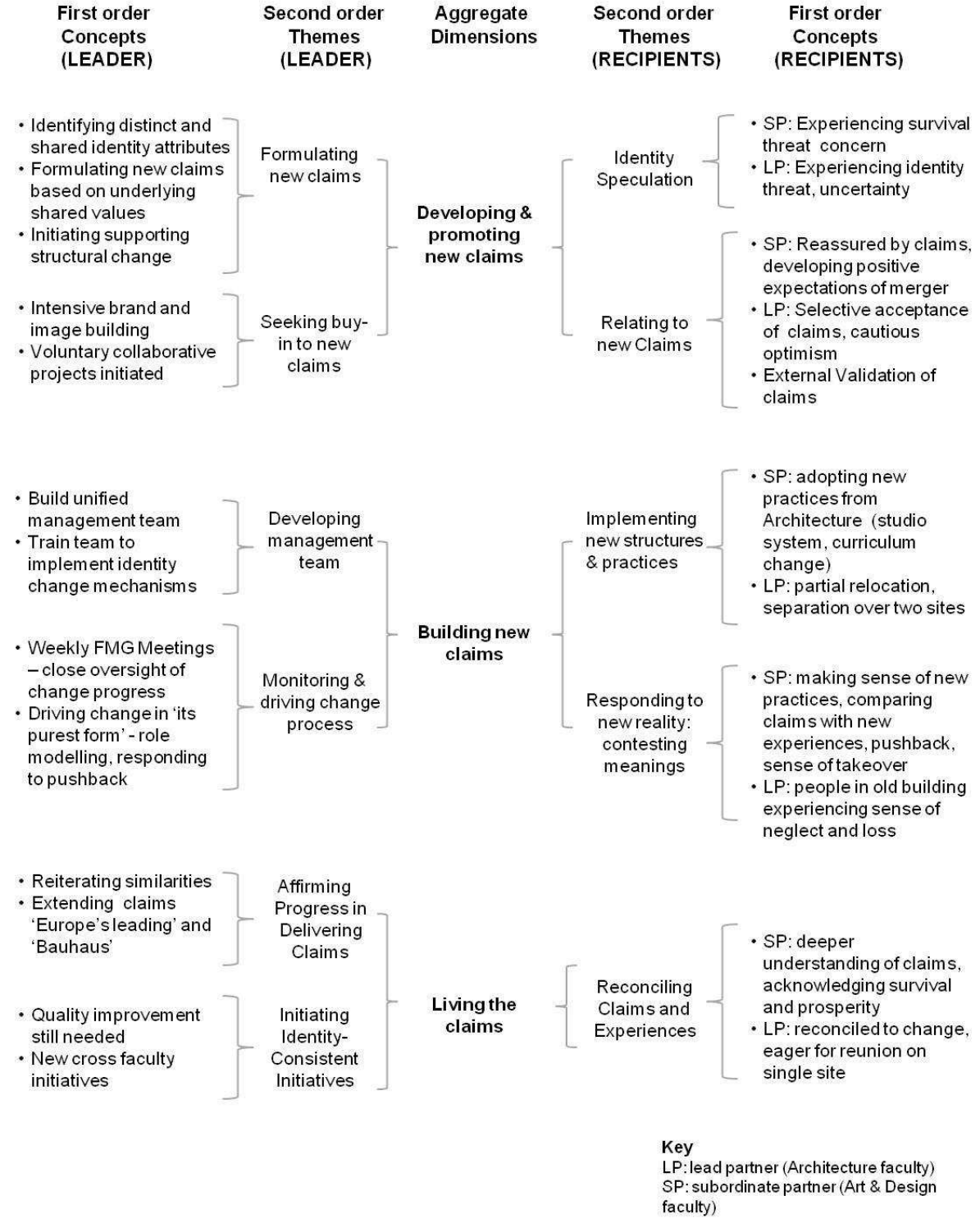
*italics denote dates linked to the research itself rather than the organisation

To develop the analysis I moved on to adopt an inductive approach to the data (Miles and Huberman 1994) in order to develop emergent themes. All data from interviews and meetings were entered into and coded in NVivo. I analysed the data, initially for references to the change process, and used this to begin to identify first order concepts and second order themes (Van Maanen 1979). Taking a comparative approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), I cycled between the data, the emerging concepts, theory and relevant literature to develop an understanding of the change process (Clark et al. 2010). First order codes were based on summations of in-vivo quotes that captured key concepts. For example, “I think that the rebranding and the re-launching of the Nash is one of the cleverest things that is going on at the moment” became part of “reassured by claims, developing positive expectations of merger”. In the second stage I used axial coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990) and searched for relationships between the concepts. I combined first-order concepts to construct a set of second-order themes as more abstract descriptions of higher-order themes (Corley and Gioia 2004). For example, “reiterating similarities” became part of “affirming progress in delivering claims”. In the final stage, I developed overarching aggregate dimensions that became the basis for an emerging process model (Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004). This process continued until data analysis failed to reveal any new concepts or relationships (Corley and Gioia 2004; Gioia et al. 2010).

I examined how the Dean, as change leader, managed the merger process. I focussed particularly on activities that concerned issues of organisational identity, such as who we are and who we are becoming. I was interested in the Dean’s claims

but also in meanings and recipient understanding. Patterns in the data showed that the two faculties were impacted very differently by the change so I explored the recipients' response from Art & Design separately to Architecture. I coded the Dean's discursive practices but also observed that the change involved visual, physical and material components such as new branding, new website and estates improvement plans and models, and changes to practice such as the new curriculum structure, which I also captured. I captured the activities of the change leader at each stage and how the recipients experienced the change process and responded to the change leader. Three aggregate dimensions emerged: developing & promoting new claims, building new claims and living the claims. I developed the findings initially as a data structure of the first order concepts, second order themes and aggregate dimensions and then as a process model to show the dynamic relationship between different elements (Clark et al. 2010; Gioia et al. 2013a; Gioia et al. 2010). Figure 6-2 shows the structuring of the data from first order concepts to second order themes and aggregate dimensions.

**Figure 6-2 Data Structure**



## 6.5 Findings and Analysis

The structure of this section follows the data structure in Figure 6-2 and explores the findings from the data analysis in greater narrative depth with supporting quotes.

### *6.5.1 Aggregate Dimension 1: Developing & Promoting New Claims*

The first phase of the change was triggered by the appointment of the Architecture Dean as 'conjoint Dean' of the Architecture and Art & Design (A&D) faculty and the Vice Chancellor's request that the Dean conduct a 3 month review to consider how best to join the two teams. During this period the Dean formulated new identity claims and then sought buy-in to the claims. Additional quotes to support Aggregate Dimension 1 are in Table 6-1 at the end of this section.

#### *6.5.1.1 Formulating New Claims (Change Leader)*

During the consultation period, the Dean spent half his time each week with A&D and met staff and students, attended exhibitions and reviewed student work. Through this he identified distinct identity attributes that applied to only one of the two faculties and underlying similarities that were common to both. The review confirmed the Dean's suspicions that the A&D faculty had been poorly managed for some time and had patchy areas of high and low quality. For, example, internally, he described the faculty as having,

> "differential quality and reputation... no overarching mission or identity, lack of self confidence and uneven motivation', 'breakdown of trust, communication and processes', 'breakdown of certain management processes' and 'a lack of strategic planning'." (Dean presentation to University Board).

In contrast the Architecture faculty was much more highly regarded. This was evidenced by the highest NSS (National Student Survey) scores in the university, performance in other national league tables, the ability to recruit high calibre (AAB A level grade) students who also paid higher fees than A&D students, and a track record of high profile awards and competition wins.

> "I mean, the [faculty] name for Architecture is very strong. And we have 88% student satisfaction, we are Number 2 in [locality], and so on." (Dean)

However, the Dean formulated new claims based on a 'shared identity based upon common values and ambitions'. He emphasised underlying shared values that could be seen as common to both faculties. For example, both faculties were interested in socially engaged forms of practice and making things with care. From this

perspective, the difference between the two faculties was simply a matter of scale, from designing a piece of jewellery or furniture to a building or town.

> "Two things keep surfacing… a deep commitment to the importance of socially engaged forms of practice…understanding of the transformative power of things…done carefully and well…disciplines that span in scale from artefact to urban design… a strong craft tradition…" (Dean)

These common values closely reflected the long standing values of the Architecture faculty but could also be regarded as an empathetic and respectful characterisation of the best of Art & Design's work. Despite significant differences and a lack of shared history, the Dean appeared to create a sense of continuity by drawing on attributes that could be plausibly ascribed to both faculties and which were attractive to both.

The way people spoke about the Dean's early communication suggest that the new claims provided an appealing narrative. The Dean appeared to justify the merger as a natural coming together of two kindred spirits which would provide new creative opportunities for both faculties to work more collaboratively. Whilst publicly claiming that the two faculties already shared much in common in terms of their organisational identity, the Dean began to address the significant differences by formulating radical changes to the course structures and practices in A&D. These planned changes provided deliberate identity change mechanisms for the next phase of the change which involved 'building new claims'. For example, the Dean stated that he planned to introduce practices to A&D that had been established for many years in Architecture, such as the studio system (see note in Table 6-2) that would increase the consistency and similarity of practice across the two faculties, and help to bring about the planned organisational identity change.

> "Starting with the studio system is competitive and it is a fundamental change in sort of culture because in fact the mechanisms are there for some areas to really thrive...it's a self-levelling system." (Dean)

The Dean also planned to move Architecture into the main A&D building (the lease was due to expire on the Architecture building). He secured funding to significantly refurbish the A&D building and planned to re-locate the postgraduate Architecture students in autumn 2012 and undergraduates a year later. From the beginning, the Dean made it clear that the building was designed in such as way that it would help to shape a shared identity. For example, it would help during the main phase of

building the new claims, by encouraging interaction.

> "We want...the ability for individuals and disciplines to...bump into each other, collaborate...an interaction-rich environment with...urban setting that [is like] the neighbourhood for families...and individuals" (Dean)

#### *6.5.1.2 Seeking Buy-In to New Claims (Change Leader)*

The formulation of new claims had been largely a solo effort by the Dean. His subsequent actions made it clear that his next priority was to gain buy-in from others. The merger plans were formally signed off by the University Board in June 2011. The plan included a 'harmonisation year' which would precede the official merger in August 2012 and allow time to put structural change in place and complete phase 1 of the building refurbishment ready for the start of the first academic year as a single faculty in September 2012. The summer exhibition catalogue, graduation speeches, newsletters and trade press interviews provided the Dean with the opportunity to publicly promote the new identity claims and to try to present the merger as an appealing venture. The Dean appeared to be adept at generating and championing upbeat news stories about the faculty that fitted with the new identity claims, such as new exhibitions or students winning prestigious prizes. This was particularly intensive during the initial phase of the merger but the Dean continued to promote the claims throughout the merger period. There were multiple audiences for this activity such as Executive level, to maintain resources and autonomy, and within the faculty to develop support for the change amongst staff and students, as well as important external validation from wider stakeholders.

The claims were promoted through discourse but also supported materially, for example, through the summer exhibition catalogues that the Dean insisted were an almost identical pair which seemed to provide a sense of similarity between the two faculties, and through physical artefacts, such as attractive drawings and models of the refurbished building.

> "Models and drawings of proposals for the long-term redesign of [the buildings] will also be on show ...and you will be welcome… to view and make comments on them" (Dean)

After consultation with staff, the faculty adopted a formal name, 'The Lord Nash Department of Art and Architecture' and informal nickname, 'The Nash' (both pseudonyms). The Dean encouraged staff and students to use the nickname. The Dean and faculty Marketing Head worked with an agency to develop a brand identity

that was very distinct from the main university. Intensive brand and image building followed. The new logo was quickly adopted on business cards, promotional literature and building signage and created a strong visual identity for the new faculty. It took significant effort to populate a new website but, once complete, it was widely acknowledged as an excellent creative arts website and projected the image of a vibrant, high quality single merged faculty.

> "I mean obviously there's no doubt about it in terms of that website... I mean it looks great, it's what you would expect wouldn't you from people in Design and Architecture." (Dean of different faculty in same university)

News, events and promotions were frequently uploaded to the new website and promoted through social media. The site provided an attractive, carefully managed, and edited representation of the new faculty identity and an inspiring and tangible sense of the faculty's full potential. This can be seen as a form of 'smoke and mirrors' in that it appeared that the new claims were realised long before the structural changes were actually in place (the website was launched in August 2012 and the main academic changes in A&D were only just being implemented in September 2012). Thus it also appeared to provide a level of protection from external criticism whilst new practices were fully implemented.

Whilst the Dean had been spending time at both sites, the other faculty was a 30 minute commute and, for most people, there had been little interaction. The Dean initiated a series of voluntary collaborative opportunities to enable tentative interaction to begin. He suggested that this would lay the ground work for the more active engagement that would take place in the next phase, which I have identified as 'building the claims'.

> "It's in their introduction, it's basically that you start by doing a project together, which is the real way of conjoining...it's going to kick off and effectively it is rather like, it is the mechanism by which we, people talk [like] a good dinner party which is putting people next to each other and hoping they talk to each other, that's all it is." (Dean)

He encouraged the Architecture students to make use of the facilities in the A&D faculty and initiated a live project around the new location (where A&D were currently based and where Architecture would move to) and invited course leaders to incorporate the project into their teaching.

#### *6.5.1.3 Identity Speculation (Recipients)*

The consultation period was a time of intense speculation for the two merger partners. The A&D faculty was a more disparate mix of historic mergers with a much weaker sense of shared organisational identity than Architecture. Staff had been through numerous redundancy rounds over the previous three years and the merger consultation was initially experienced by A&D as a threat to survival and job security rather than to identity.

> "then [the previous Dean] announced that [the new Dean] had got the job as a conjoint dean and that he was asked to undertake a review of the faculty. So, there was an underlying threat in that because people thought you know 'we've been told we are so bad, the university believes we're bad. They are just going ... this guy is going to come in, review and close us down'." (A&D FMG Member)

One person commented that, "there were lots of kind of myths and rumours about [the Dean] before he arrived". Whilst people worried about closure, there was also the prospect that the Dean would be the person to turn the faculty around. Symbolic meaning was attached to his accessibility which was in sharp contrast to the former management team.

> "people suddenly then you know rallied behind him because he came, he met people which [previous Dean] didn't, he shut himself away...right from the beginning, he did his 2.5 days in both buildings" (A&D FMG Member)

The Architecture faculty was located in its own building, separate from the main university and had a clear sense of self-esteem, ambition and belonging.

> "and there's this kind of idea that the School of Architecture is very set aside from everything else. . We sort of saw ourselves as an island which I mean in terms of, I think that's why I liked it." (Architecture Administrator)

There was evidence that the possibility of merger was interpreted as an identity threat due to a desire to maintain their existing identity but also a belief that the A&D faculty was lower quality and a concern about dilution of identity through becoming significantly larger as A&D was roughly twice the size of Architecture.

> "....I think there is still a residual concern, probably for everybody in Architecture ...you're going from a very tight unit into something which is potentially sprawling and which there is a risk that the very particular identity and value that has accrued will be dissolved in this kind of greater thing". (Architecture FMG Member)

#### *6.5.1.4 Relating to New Claims (Recipients)*

As the Dean began to communicate his vision, comments from A&D suggest they were reassured by the Dean's identity claims and began to speak with enthusiasm

about the merger.

> "he explained it, he said it's a new start, we've got this massive, great opportunity to build something different and new. We are merging Architecture and the Arts. Art have been damaged by previous management, there's a lot of work to be done there to re-boost that, we're doing it... So, he explained the vision to me. And I liked that, I like that challenge. I thought "oh, this is something I can contribute to, hopefully". (A&D FMG Member)

People referred to the material artefacts and visual images, such as models of the new building, which seemed to help them in imagining an attractive shared future on a single site.

> "I felt he's somebody who knows what he's talking about and he's got his vision... when he gives a presentation it's nearly always got visuals. So...he doesn't just stand there and say we're going to do this next year, the plans were there and his researchers made the images of what he was going to do... It was very sexy from the word go...And these days of digital imaging you can make a school look finished and that's what he did. I thought it was a really good re-launch" (A&D Course Leader)

People spoke in glowing terms about the new website and brand and these appeared to provide an early sense of a single faculty identity that was appealing.

> "The thing that I thought was absolutely amazing was when they got that website up with all the studios, that for me was like we're here". (A&D Course Leader)

People may also have been able to relate to the new claims in part because they were stated in rather broad, ambiguous terms, such as 'socially engaged', that seemed to be appealing to both faculties and to wider stakeholders. A&D staff in particular did not appear to be provided with any detailed understanding at this time of how their everyday work would change. However, the Deans plans were sufficiently substantial that they appeared to address earlier concerns around survival and the risk of closure.

There was still evidence of some residual concerns. The faculty had been poorly managed for years so people still voiced some suspicions that this was just another in a long line of painful changes.

> "... as I say, it kind of starts sounding a bit paranoid, a bit kind of negative but because the university has had generally had so many problems for so long that there's always that idea that, you know, 'oh well, here's somebody with another plan', you know, to do something. Is it likely to be any more successful than all the others? So, you know, slight scepticism, cynicism perhaps." (A&D Course Leader)

Within Architecture, the response to the Dean's new claims was more circumspect. It

was evident when speaking to people that the faculty valued its existing organisational identity so there was potentially more to lose than to gain. Residual concerns were voiced about the quality of the work in A&D and whether 'consistency' was entirely desirable given that Architecture students paid higher fees,

> "It's an ethical issue across the university, let's treat every student the same but actually, Architecture students pay [more]; how do you justify that to the student?" (Architecture FMG member)

There was more experience in Architecture of working in Art schools. This was less so for A&D staff who had not undertaken 5 years of professional architecture training. This led to a mix of examples of both enthusiasm and caution around the idea of collaboration. One FMG member felt that the opportunity to span different disciplines encouraged creativity, whilst another had experienced a difficult merger where sharing workshop space had led to bottlenecks and conflict,

> "This was the biggest bone of contention at [another University] was over the different use of workshops because the Visual Arts students...they'd block book workshops...there are going to be conflicting demands." (Architecture FMG Member)

> "as an architect you use - your creativity spans. It spans from graphic design to ...to nice drawings to nice models. So you become a graphic designer, you become an artist…" (Architecture FMG Member)

There was also evidence of a shared belief that architects embrace uncertainty, so whilst privately unsettling, publicly people tended to speak in positive terms about the prospect of change.

> "..part of our professional training...it's in our DNA that sort of three months down the line is distant future because in the project, anything can happen. So in that sense, we're not your typical university staff in the way we think." (Architecture Head)

People spoke in praise of the building refurbishment plans, which were designed by respected in-house architects, the attractive new location, the new website and rebranding, and the opportunity to use new tools such as 3D printing.

Early external validation of claims came in the form of positive press publicity, for example, about the building plans or winning prizes.

> "…there has been a lot of publicity – you know it's been really good…things like silver medal have been one, and there has been high profile wins and all sorts of third parties have rode in behind the Nash identity." (Dean)

**Table 6-1 Developing and Promoting New Claims**

| **Developing and Promoting New Claims – Supporting Quotes** | |
|---|---|
| Formulating new claims (leader)<br><br>• Identifying distinct and shared identity attributes<br>• Formulating new claims based on underlying shared values<br>• Initiating supporting structural change | Distinct attributes: "I have a faculty with the highest NSS [national student survey] score which is [Architecture] at [nearly 90] percent and I have the faculty with the lowest NSS score are sort of [below 50] percent Art & Design…so there is an inherent issue there and it's very much to do with what I was saying previously about harmonisation before you merge because obviously the risk to Architecture in terms of its NSS score dropping." (Dean Interview)<br>"if [the University] has an Ivory Tower academically it is that area [Architecture] and that's where we get the best students... and then of course you've got [Art & Design] which, to some extent, I always think a little bit like the poor cousin, compared with [Architecture]." (Executive level Interview)<br>Underlying Shared Values: "Identity and Mission: define a shared identity based upon common values and ambitions…socially engaged Art, Craft and Design practice, all scales and forms of practice embedded in and dependent upon each other 1:1 to 1:10000 from artefact to urbanism, played out through strong course and shared and live projects, applied to local and international contexts, 'Making'…" (Dean PowerPoint slide proposal to Board)<br>Importance of Shared Material Identity – new building refurbishment: Risk [if funding is not granted] of "inadequate investment resulting in poor identity and poor marketability". "Failure to understand the importance of buildings. Identity." (Dean Board presentation)<br>Structural change: "Harmonisation of academic structures allowing for maximum collaboration, efficiency, speculation and invention, courses delivered in atelier, studio, workshops based on [Architecture] studio system, common [history and theory] curriculum, common live projects, public lectures, consolidation of estate [in to one location]…supporting quality and promoting risk taking [through] - internal competition: student, studio, course, school and faculty, external scrutiny, devolution of responsibility and risk (development of devolved strategic plans and research strategies by each School for implementation in 2012-13)." (Dean PowerPoint slide proposal to Board)<br>"it's a change to a completely different way of delivering education which is more sympathetic towards art than the modular structure as it exists... the 30 long credit is what Architecture has done for years and it has been very successful." (Dean) |
| Seeking buy-in to new claims (leader)<br><br>• Intensive brand and image building<br>• Voluntary collaborative projects initiated | Name and website: "Our identity needs to be defined. In the next few weeks we will begin to discuss the name of the new faculty. In the meantime I call it [the Nash] and would encourage you to do the same. We are also working on plans for a new website and finding ways of communicating better." (Dean)<br>Brand: "it's branded within the sort of overarching brand of the faculty which is [the Nash] but it does allow for various, slightly different, strategies to be played between the schools." (Dean)<br>Signage: "Yes, we don't want university signage." (Dean)<br>Image building: "The most crucial thing now ... I think it's of secondary importance whether the internal environment of the faculty is yet coherent. What will make it coherent is external voices acknowledging |

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|---|---|
| | that it's stronger. That's going to be the turning point... It's people being proud because other people are saying, 'Oh, this is okay.' And then it's like lighting up a bonfire: it just grows." (Dean)<br>Voluntary live project: "It's in their introduction, it's basically that you start by doing a project together, which is the real way of conjoining rather than start just dealing with admin and so forth"… "it's going to kick off and effectively it is rather like, it is the mechanism by which we, people talk [like] a good dinner party which is putting people next to each other and hoping they talk to each other, that's all it is." (Dean)<br>Voluntary Architecture students using Art & Design facilities: "There's been a threefold increase in the use of the [Art & Design] workshop which is dedicated to Fine Art students and that threefold increase is entirely Architecture students already… I'm delighted and I think the effect that the keenness of the Architecture students is having in relation to [Art & Design] is quite profound. It's helping, it's pushing people and some people have come away enthusiastic about the quality of students they're dealing with in some areas." (Dean) |
| Identity Speculation (recipients)<br>• SP: Experiencing survival threat concern<br>• LP: Experiencing identity threat, uncertainty | "… there were lots of kind of myths and rumours about [the Dean] before he arrived. There was a rumour that he was never around. There was a rumour that …he was really controlling with money." (A&D FMG Member)<br>"subjectively it does feel as if there have been so many changes, so many restructurings and re-organisations that it's all about surviving them, really…" (A&D Course leader)<br>"The funny thing is, because we'd been so isolated in [Architecture building] for so long, we still felt like it was our, yes, this is our little world and nothing could penetrate it." (Architecture course leader)<br>"there is a sort of dynamism, particularly, to this faculty." (Architecture FMG Member)<br>"I mean, we had resisted it [merger] very carefully previously and had sought to deflect that at various points in its suggestion in the intervening period and I think probably our initial reaction was, why do we want this?" (Architecture FMG Member) |
| Relating to New Claims (recipients)<br>• SP: Reassured by claims, developing positive expectations of merger<br>• LP: Selective acceptance of claims, cautious optimism<br>• External Validation of claims | "It was cultural. It was, you know, the confidence to say 'we can be better than we currently are and we're good currently'. That was the main thing that I think people grasped from it [the Dean's communication] rather than being told that we're a luxury that contemporary higher education can no longer afford and that we should all grow up and smell the coffee and get with the program." (A&D FMG member)<br>"...he was entirely presenting what people wanted to hear at that time which was consultation was of critical importance, the duty of care and those kinds of ideas." (A&D FMG Member)<br>"So I thought actually, there'll be more autonomy and this was one of the things that was very much sold to me was the autonomy, you know the way the Nash was going, all the developments of the Nash which all sounded fantastic." (A&D FMG Member)<br>"He doesn't come in talking about, I mean he might interview people and talk to people but it's not like a business school…it's actually the front of the merger was the new building…all I can remember of it, was the fact that there were these great images of what they knew [it] could be." (A&D Course leader) |

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|---|---|
| | "I think that the rebranding and the re-launching of the Nash is one of the cleverest things that's going on at the moment...people ask me "where are you from", I can point and say "there, I'm from the Nash". I've not said I'm from [main university], I've not said that for a year or two. I work at the Nash..." (A&D Course leader)<br>"what's been interesting to watch is how quickly the Nash brand has gained currency, especially in relation to recruiting students. [It's evident] by feedback, by what people write in their statements when they apply." (Architecture Head of School)<br>"this humanities sort of path through your studies in architecture is extremely important…" (Architecture course leader)<br>"Yes. I mean, I think my only concern with it was that we, that it was a separation into…we know we're still public artists, we're also scientists and engineers and I thought that the isolation maybe was going to become problematic…" (Architecture course leader)<br>External Validation: "I do think my job is to spend more time looking at this thing from the outside – genuinely outside, than it is to look at it from internally, and that is my job, so the way in which the design press and design culture – the re-working of the Nash name and building has been received as really positive..." (Dean)<br>"So, the Nash name, the Nash identity has been established actually much quicker than I imagined it to be, and people are reporting that when student potentials come they say the Nash, they don't say [main university name]." (Dean)<br>"there was the press, stuff about the building which [the Dean] used his contacts through [trade press]…making things happen by saying they're going to happen." (A&D FMG Member) |

### *6.5.2 Aggregate Dimension 2: Building the New Claims*

Having developed and promoted the new organisational identity claims, the next phased I identified was the realisation of the claims. This involved implementing a range of identity change mechanisms that provided common structures and practices and a means of guiding people towards the shared identity through increased consistency, transparency and quality. The Dean began by developing a new management team and then by monitoring and driving the change process. Additional quotes to support Aggregate Dimension 2 are in Table 6-3 at the end of this section.

#### *6.5.2.1 Developing Management Team (Change Leader)*

In March 2012, the Dean restructured the management team with three School Heads (Art, Design and Architecture – who also had a cross faculty role such as quality, research or learning & teaching), deputy school heads (for the two larger schools – Design & Architecture), and then a series of cross faculty roles including

Deputy Dean, Business Manager, Project Office Head, Marketing Head, Technical Head and Student Experience co-ordinator. As part of the interview and selection process the Dean communicated the sort of leadership he was expecting and invited applicants to present their vision for the role. The Dean spoke of wanting to appoint people who could step up as autonomous and visible leaders in their own right, but could operate as part of a unified management team and support the transition to the new merged organisational identity.

> "each School will be led by its own Head of School and will define its own identity, but be open to collaboration across the disciplines." (Dean)

Days after the restructure, the Dean co-located the new FMG team in a shared office for part of each week which he said was to encourage communication and facilitate decision making.

> "I am proposing that the new Senior management Group is located in the first instance in the open plan offices in [building] so that we can communicate easily and make rapid decisions during this first phase…" (Dean email to FMG)

Co-location appeared to provide a very physical form of sensegiving by quickly providing the look and feel of a single, unified management team. It was a form of sensebreaking in that the new office was physically remote from non-FMG members, a separate building with its own pass code entry system, and this prevented some existing practices from continuing. For example, non-FMG members were no longer able to drop in frequently and informally to chat. FMG members said that working in close proximity helped them to develop as a unified team.

> "our relationships have gone quite well - just got used to each other I think ... through overhearing you know expletives, exclamations, horror, panic... without anybody judging that means that you aren't coping..." (FMG Member A&D)

Co-location encouraged changes in patterns of interaction. Working together meant that sensemaking tended to take place between FMG members and helped to develop shared understandings of the new claims and promote clarity across the management team.

The Dean guided the new team in implementing the identity change mechanisms. He met with them individually to discuss their objectives and set up a series of training session to explain the budgeting and HR issues associated with their roles. He continued to encourage the team, particularly the School Heads, to be more

visible as leaders, for example, by asking them to present the prizes at the summer exhibition.

> "As I said I've quite consciously tried as far as the faculty is concerned, the staff, to be in the background for a year because one's really, really wanting each of the heads of area...to genuinely take ownership of their area, set up their teams, communicate, do whatever they're doing." (Dean)

#### *6.5.2.2 Monitoring and Driving Change Process (Change Leader)*

The fortnightly FMG meeting provided close oversight of the change process. A series of lower level meetings was also instigated to feed into the FMG meeting and disseminate information out. The regular face to face interaction with the whole of FMG allowed the Dean to monitor the change process. He could use sensegiving to develop a deeper shared understanding of the meanings of the new identity claims: to make sure that FMG understood how the identity change mechanisms would help to deliver the claims.

> Analogy between teaching and the identity change mechanisms: "you don't teach a student by yelling at them and saying 'get better'; you teach them by showing them and putting them in an environment where the expectations are higher and higher, and higher and higher until they don't even notice and they just keep going higher and higher, and that is how we have got such good results with students." (Dean)

The Dean could also respond to any challenges or concerns. For example, he responded to pushback by encouraging FMG to implement the changes in their 'purest form' as he said that it would be harder in the long run if they did not drive up quality as quickly as possible; and thus help to realise the claims.

> "The response in many cases is not to push harder to go for the purest version of it that will work. The response is to compromise, and to nibble away at the true structures, such as the studio systems, such as crits, such as things that are designed in their purest form to bring about the change, to sort of compromise on that such that actually ultimately it makes it harder because it's slower and it's less effective." (Dean)

Promotion of the new claims continued at the faculty level, for example, through the website and newsletters but the meetings enabled the Dean and FMG to respond to more detailed and context-specific concerns and guide recipient sensemaking towards implementing the new practices in their purest form. Discursive sensegiving became more individually tailored and clear and happened through deeds as well as words. The FMG team were encouraged to role model the new identity. For example, the Head of Design School headed her own studio and was thus able to

instil confidence that the studio system worked in an A&D context. The Architecture management team were on hand to support the first ever studio voting in A&D and to remind staff that the system had been running successfully for years in Architecture. The FMG team were also visible with hammer and nails putting up the summer exhibitions and afterwards collecting empty beer bottles.

> "... I kind of make a point of walking around every morning, after the show and picking up the beer bottles because...if I pick up rubbish, other people can't turn around and say, I'm not picking up rubbish." (Architecture School Head)

#### *6.5.2.3 Implementing new structures and practices (Recipients)*

For Art & Design the start of the new academic year was their first experience of a wealth of new practices that would provide the structural mechanisms to deliver the new identity claims. The adoption of Architecture practices by A&D provided a mechanism to establish a shared identity. New practices, such as the studio system (see note in Table 6-2) increased consistency and transparency between academics, and encouraged staff to 'raise their game' by introducing a level of peer pressure that the Dean argued was a 'self-levelling system' that would improve quality within A&D.

**Table 6-2 Note on Studio System and Common Curriculum**

| |
|---|
| Students vote to join a studio of their choice which is based on a theme e.g. 'ethical renewal' or 'revolution'. Each studio might include students from a range of different, but related, courses and disciplines. The studio is year-long and accounts for about half of teaching time. The studio is usually delivered by one or two academics so the voting system can feel like a public popularity contest. There are common events throughout the year such as a week where residential study trips take place and weeks were 'crits' take place – students present their work and rigourous internal and external feedback is given. The studio model is used in many top architecture schools but is not commonly used across Art & Design disciplines. The Art & Design courses had previously been modular based with a wider variety of shorter, discipline specific modules. Other common curriculum elements include a new History and Theory module (pseudonym) that is year long, takes up about one quarter of student teaching time (30 credits), runs in slightly adapted formats across the whole faculty and is led by a member of Architecture. Faculty wide moderation of assessment was also introduced to increase consistency in standards of marking. |

For A&D, their experience of the merger changed from voluntary opportunities and aspirational discourse to largely obligatory changes to people's everyday practices. One person estimated that 21 out of 30 teaching weeks had something new in them.

> "...So I did a week count and I think it was 21 of 30 academic weeks were non-

> standard because they've got a special something in them and this has driven them mental, as you can well understand." (A&D FMG Member)

The volume of change resulted in stress and extreme working hours.

> "I'm working till 12 o'clock at night, I work at weekends, you know, I don't have a life at the moment really." (A&D FMG Member)

Course leaders reported feeling overwhelmed by the scale of academic curriculum change but had little choice but to muddle through and try to survive the process. Sensemaking appeared to take on a more active form as people began to appreciate what the organisational identity change would mean for their every day practice and to make tough choices about where to focus their efforts.

> "…it was really hand to mouth the first, and then with the studios coming in plus new modules, it felt, I mean I'm only just catching up now really. I was giving the students verbal briefs that I hadn't written..." (A&D Course leader)

Added to this, A&D were teaching in the newly refurbished building and in unfamiliar studio based home rooms, the building refurbishment work also over ran, and basic equipment such as chairs and tables were missing. The Dean had designed the new building to be a visible representation of the new faculty identity and facilitate collaboration through an 'urban design' like a neighbourhood with 'boulevards' and street style lighting that would encourage interdisciplinary interaction. However, initially at least, when the Architecture postgraduate students arrived in November 2012, there were stories circulating suggesting that the Art students in particular viewed it as an invasion of their building. The Dean and Deputy Dean initiated the help of the Fine Art course leader and for the formal opening of the new floors the students produced badges saying, 'hug an architect' or 'hug an artist' and posters advertised a joint party titled 'Art-itecture'.

> "here was a little flurry of, it's a bit like you have an empty flat upstairs and suddenly you know you're getting neighbours and suddenly you're slightly terrified of your neighbours and the idea they're going to thud around and play loud music, and I think there was a momentary I think stickers going up: we're about to be invaded, mobilise!" (Deputy Dean)

For Architecture, the move represented a partial relocation, which split postgraduate and undergraduate across two sites. Postgraduate Architecture students joined A&D in their freshly refurbished building whilst the Architecture undergraduates remained at the old location, pending the second phase of refurbishment.

#### *6.5.2.4 Responding to new reality: contested meanings (Recipients)*

Faculty wide newsletters and good news stories continued to provide a means of influencing recipient sensemaking. However, for A&D, the implementing of the identity change mechanisms and the 'doing' of new practices shaped understanding of the meanings of the Dean's claims. For example, academic staff observed each other to see what to do and to benchmark their own performance against their peers.

> "Because it started getting competitive and seriously competitive...even my course leader was accusing me of over tutoring the students for presentations because I'd have them in a military-like style, I'd have them in practicing, going through it." (A&D Course Leader Interview)

Faculty wide moderating of marking provided a means of increasing consistency of standards across different disciplines. The curriculum changes encouraged transparency, for example studio voting or different studios presenting their work to each other. People spoke of pressure to raise their game to avoid embarrassment.

> "And so the responsibility and the fact that there's nowhere to hide has been a lot of pressure for staff but, therefore, they've really wanted it to succeed because they don't want to look embarrassed." (A&D FMG Member)

Pushback occurred as people moved from a high level understanding of the Dean's evocative identity claims to a more direct experience of what this would mean for their everyday lives. The new curriculum and studio system encouraged consistency but began to be seen as inflexible, placing too much emphasis on similarity and not enough on difference. For example, people questioned whether a curriculum designed for AAB Architecture students was suitable for A&D students with much lower entry grades.

> "… we have very different student demographics and we should be celebrating that, not turning our students into one size fits all because we won't do it..." (A&D FMG member)

Fine Art emphasised differences in the way art work is traditionally assessed.

> "So I'm actually finding that I'm having meetings where I have to kind of advocate all the time for fine art, because I think they want fine art, they like fine art but there's a slight kind of, 'Well we do it like this and that's probably the best way to do it'. So I'm having to sit in meetings and really explain why fine art is assessed in this way." (Art School Head)

Even at FMG level, the Dean's claims about autonomous leadership came under pressure. There was general agreement that the administration restructure had not

worked well and FMG members found themselves spending too much time pushing paper rather than acting as visible leaders.

> "I still spend endless, meaningless hours photocopying things and it's not cost effective and it doesn't help my, you know … it doesn't help finding space to do strategic thinking ..." (FMG Member)

The scale of change and imposition of practices prompted comments that the merger was actually a takeover.

> 'they are going to call the shots. So, [A&D Building] has been taken over and will become… we will become the School of Architecture with some art and design sort of strapped on to it, I think." (Art Technician)

In some cases pushback led to attempts to 'water down' the changes and not deliver them in exactly the way that the Dean intended.

> "The classic example of that for me was [School] internal crits midyear...internal crits where studios showed but [School] didn't invite any external critics because ...staff had said..., ooh we can't do that; we are not going to take part if we have external critics." (Dean)

At the level of claims, recipient meaning making occurred in response to attempts to gain buy-in to claims through faculty-wide, evocative, well-orchestrated communication and carefully managed and edited branding and websites. This aspect of the identity change was widely considered to be very successful. However, with hindsight, this was relatively superficial and aroused little resistance. More detailed meaning making only occurred as people implemented the identity change mechanisms and experienced what it meant to be part of an ambitious, prestige driven organisation through changes to their everyday working practices. Meaning-making occurred by adopting and experiencing new practices, observing others, and talking to peers. This process was less open to careful editing and resulted in a more contested response to the identity claims.

Counter-challenges in the form of contests over meanings often surfaced at the lower level meetings and were responded to by FMG. FMG were visible as role models and often on the ground at key events to shape recipient sensemaking at an individual, face to face level. Despite start of term chaos and pushback, this more detailed face-to-face and hand-to-hand sensegiving seemed to help to drive the implementation of the identity change mechanisms 'in their purest form' (consistent with a deliberate rather than emergent plan). From a sensebreaking perspective, the

changes were embedded in the new curriculum and academic calendar and there was no obvious way to avoid them. The only real alternative was to look for a new job.

> "it's the first time in my entire teaching career where I've said if I could leave tomorrow I would. And yet, I come back and then I'm caught up in… it's a sort of love hate thing." (A&D Course leader)

The continuous supply of good news stories through the website and meetings promoted a sense of progress and achievement. The website was also a mechanism that could be instrumental in shaping organisational identity as it set out a high standard of presentation and people could critically compare their own entries on the site with others.

Within Architecture, the postgraduate students seemed to embrace the new location and surprisingly, it was the people who remained in the old Architecture building who experienced a sense of neglect and loss. The re-location of the management team, admin team and postgraduate students left the old Architecture building feeling dead.

> "This place has felt gutted, frankly. It just feels like they've been holding shop. It doesn't feel like a school. So, I feel sorry for the students in that sense, there's no sense of there being an administrative or staff centre. It's just gone…" (Architecture - remaining faculty member)

People left behind struggled to stay motivated. For example, the Head of School had to introduce a number of initiatives to increase attendance at the School level meeting.

**Table 6-3 Building New Claims**

| **Building New Claims – Supporting Quotes** | |
|---|---|
| Developing Management Team<br><br>• Build unified management team<br>• Train team to implement identity change mechanisms | Building: "within the creative industries or creative academic areas, schools are the unit of currency. So, an art school is an art school, an architecture school is an architecture school, a design... less so with design and media. And they need strong leadership, they need strong identity or it doesn't work…it constitutionally requires everybody to work in a collegiate manner." (Dean)<br>"I want the Schools to be autonomous and responsible but I do not want them to become isolated... So, there are plenty of mechanisms for collaboration." (Dean)<br>Training: "I want you to be the figure head of the school. I want you to lead. I want you to be much more strident, and apparent, and accountable to all of your staff and students such that it's your own invention not a sub – not our invention because it just won't work otherwise." (Dean) |

| | |
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| | "The priority now is for the three Nash schools: Art, Architecture and Design to define their own positions within the overall Nash identity. [School Heads] are currently working on this with staff and students in each of their schools. A key part of this will be our summer shows and our online catalogues." (Dean Newsletter)<br>"I mean, each of the heads of school has to make a sort of strategic vote on the vision and I don't think they've been invited to do that up until now, it hasn't been expected of them. You know, they've just been expected just to keep, manage things...And they can restructure their areas afterwards with further to get rid of two thirds of their staff and employ one big professor, if they want, that's up to them. I will simply support them in what they want to do." (Dean) |
| Monitoring and driving change process (leader)<br>• Weekly FMG Meetings – close oversight of change progress<br>• Driving change in 'its purest form' - role modelling, responding to pushback | Close oversight: "So even at times of high pressure, those meetings need to happen in that weekly cycle and the minutes need to be with us on the Friday…because we do not have time to go dark during the whole period of assessment, and there's too much on our plates." (Dean)<br>Driving: "Yes. And, what is aggravating me is that there is a lot… sort of…we have developed these sharp tools to make things better quickly and a lot of people just sort of – filing off the sharpness of them. "Well we will have a crit but we won't have an external critic…but WE can't - it will be threatening." (Dean) |
| Implementing New Structures and Practices (recipients)<br>• SP: adopting new practices from Architecture (studio system, curriculum change)<br>• LP: partial relocation, separation over two sites | "…given that it was kind of this big bang change last year…there wasn't a lot of time to worry about the niceties..." (A&D Course leader)<br>"… just cannot hear herself think or speak because there's fine artists knocking up sculptures behind you and there's three other studios shouting at there, you know, it's really hard." (A&D Course leader)<br>"I think we're all muddling through a little bit." (A&D Course leader)<br>"…it was pretty horrible really and [School Head] was screaming at us to move out of here and start using the studio space but the studio space had no chairs." (A&D Course leader)<br>"But I think I have to tell you that everyone is suffering with stress. Everyone. I mean it was kind of a relief for me because I'd been waking up at 4 o clock in the morning and ….what was reassuring about it was that I came in and spoke about it and everyone was suffering the same..." (A&D Course Leader Interview)<br>"then we had to do the big move which is … thankfully at the beginning of the year, it's only mildly disruptive. It is disruptive but it's not terrible because you haven't accumulated all the year's worth of rubbish and models and drawings." (Architecture Course Leader)<br>"...this year with the move, it was obvious and immediate and I think that we've made ourselves a bit of a nuisance in some respects because, not really knowing how to use some of the Art School facilities, you tend to make mistakes doing it. I know the plaster man wasn't very happy with the Architecture students." (Architecture Course Leader) |
| Responding to new reality: contesting | "there are things where you have a battle that you need to stand your ground…and then there are other things where you kind of think, step back…there's learning to be had here. There may be something very |

| | |
|---|---|
| meanings (recipients)<br><br>• SP: making sense of new practices, comparing claims with new experiences, pushback, sense of takeover<br>• LP: people in old building experiencing sense of neglect and loss | useful here." (A&D FMG Member)<br>"And I still don't feel I have enough time to put into strategic and forward thinking." (A&D FMG Member)<br>"I think there is a general belief that everything that happens in the School of Architecture is better than anything that happens outside of the School of Architecture and that is insidious across most things." (A&D FMG Member)<br>"I think it felt a little bit like the Architecture thing has been a bit of a takeover… imposed is perhaps a bit strong…I don't know exactly what goes on and I only really hear whispers…but I kind of feel as if, yes, it kind of felt a little bit like a takeover…" (A&D Course Leader)<br>"Yes, I increased my visible presence when I was there [old Architecture building] and people still rallied to that concern that it is very easy to kind of get a sense of drift, even if that wasn't the case but just because they didn't see people and so on." (Architecture Head of School)<br>"I will be still more here [Architecture building], because I will be more in charge of the undergraduates, which is here. So, in a way, I will be almost on my own here." (Architecture Course Leader)<br>"… over the past year the management have moved down. So, we see less of [Dean] and we see less of [Deputy Dean]…The people I was teaching with previously, the post graduates, they are down there and I wasn't the part of their teaching anymore. I didn't get a handle on how the students were faring down there." (Architecture Course Leader)<br>"It was very easy when we were all on the same floor at [old Architecture Building]; it's much harder now." (Architecture FMG Member) |

### *6.5.3 Aggregate Dimension 3: Living the Claims*

The academic cycle culminated with the summer exhibitions in June. The end of term provided a period of reflection and preparation for the next year. The Dean reviewed progress in delivering the new claims and initiated new identity-consistent initiatives. Additional quotes to support Aggregate Dimension 3 are in Table 6-4 at the end of this section.

#### *6.5.3.1 Affirming Progress in Deliver Claims (Change Leader)*

The Dean publicly expressed delight with the progress of the merger. He used newsletters, press articles and any public opportunity to reiterate the underlying similarities in values and consolidate and strengthen the identity claims.

> "There is a central idea of care in relation to society…to craft…and environment. Now that Architecture has been merged…[it becomes clear that] somehow they share same culture & values and [so] their merging was not a difficult operation." (Dean newsletter)

He also affirmed the building as a physical representation of the new identity.

> "it's a proper representation of who we are and where we are... provisional and…urban." (Dean)

The Dean extended the claims by adopting a new label, 'one of Europe's leading creative institutions', which appeared in an internal newsletter and a press interview. It coincided with the inclusion of the faculty in a list of top European institutions. Another label the Dean spoke about, likened the merger to the 'Bauhaus' movement. This first appeared in an article about the faculty in a national newspaper, in a column written by an A&D faculty course leader. One person commented that you can't really talk about art and architecture without someone comparing you to the Bauhaus:

> "as soon as you get cross-discipline art subjects, creative subject, craft, all in one building, there's only one thing you can come up with really." (Architecture course leader)

The new labels complimented the nascent identity of the merged faculty and were shared with others, internally and externally. The Dean's continued promotion of the faculty as a success story, provided a means to strengthen the new organisational identity and the identity claims.

#### *6.5.3.2 Initiating Identity Consistent Initiatives (Change Leader)*

Whilst publicly promoting the merger as a success story, privately the Dean stated that success was only partial and the process was far from complete.

> "I mean it's been extraordinary really and I think you could see in some of the areas, a clear example is something like interiors and 3D. You could see its real benefit already. So we're 30% of the way there in one year and that's not bad." (Dean)

Quality was an important element of the new shared identity but distinctions in quality between the two faculties remained in many areas. However, greater transparency meant it was easier to pin-point areas of low and high quality. The Dean continued to seek quality improvement within A&D and was ultimately prepared to close areas if it seemed they were incapable of significant improvement.

> "There are very, very few at the level of quality that we need to go forward at, the level at which we are beginning to pitch ourselves…." (Dean)

Work to realise the claims continued through the existing identity change mechanisms and introduction of new mechanisms. Work began on Phase 2 of building refurbishment, ready for the undergraduate Architecture students to re-

locate in October 2013. The Dean launched a series of new initiatives to strengthen cross-faculty identity and reduce the risk of the Schools developing too much as silos. These included expanding the History and Theory module into a broader cross-faculty initiative (Nash Culture) and appointing a highly-acclaimed expert to run a new live project for the faculty. The Dean argued that this had always been part of his original intent.

> "If you dig out the original, these initiatives you're calling initiatives are not initiatives if you dig out the very first presentation you'll just see its just slightly unfinished business... They're just literally things that have always been said but have just taken a little bit longer than anything else." (Dean)

#### *6.5.3.3 Reconciling Claims and Experiences (Recipients)*

The end of the academic year also provided a period of reflection for academic staff in both A&D and Architecture. Within A&D, people spoke with a level of acceptance about the identity change mechanisms and their benefit for staff and students.

> "The School has definitely bought into the studio system, so the kind of, you know, recognition of that as an academic vision is now, I think, owned by most of the School." (School Head, A&D)

The continued stream of stories which presented the merger as a success also appeared to generate enthusiasm for the new organisational identity.

> "So our recruitment has been quite strong so...and that's gone well because our conversion, I think, is the best in the university." (Marketing Head)

There was a sense of fatigue expressed but mixed with pride and with far less anger than at the start of term.

> "And we've done an amazing amount, you know, we really have and when you write it all up and read it all out, you know, it's like, Jesus! No wonder we're knackered ..." (A&D FMG Member)

Some tensions remained, for example, people spoke of their frustration with the administration system. However, there was evidence of a deeper understanding of what 'autonomy' meant and how much FMG could restyle their own area to fit their needs. An example of this was an A&D School Head who initiated a restructure in order to reduce the administrative load.

> "... I'm going to implement a different sort of structure in the School...so that I will have some support because not having a Deputy, not having administrative support, has been a real problem..." (A&D School Head)

Rather than conflicting with the Dean and being seen to water down the level of

consistency across the faculty, these local adjustments were viewed as evidence that people were acting autonomously, but in line with the overall faculty identity.

> "And that's why I think what [A&D School Head] done is great. I mean she has sort of said well, I want a project team and she has found the money, she has found the resources and things have been moved around... is a proper response to the situation that she needs to address. And it's that response it's not an imposed response." (Dean)

A&D appeared to have gained a deeper understanding of the meanings behind the Dean's claims through their lived experiences. The continual opportunities for the Dean and FMG to influence recipient sensemaking provided a means to help people understand, implement and accept the identity change mechanisms that would enable the faculty to deliver the claims. By the end of the academic year, comments from people acknowledged the faculty had prospered, occasionally in spite of but, mostly because of the new practices. There was also evidence that they understood that there was some scope to tailor the changes, where it could be shown that it would better fit their particular discipline.

Within Architecture, people expressed relief that their reputation had not been damaged by the merger and the new faculty identity was potentially stronger than the old. They also talked about the positive press publicity over the year and the implementation of the new brand and website.

> "...in the professional press, we're absolutely up there and winning prizes, gaining, you know, notice, being written about…for Architecture it was good before the Nash…we had something to lose by going into the Nash which I was very aware of. I'm quite happy that we don't seem to have lost that." (Architecture School Head)

Any difficulties at the start of the year for the postgraduate Architecture team who re-located to the refurbished building seemed to be quickly forgotten.

> "the students have forgotten. But they were all very sore... Last year they did that kind of November move; this year the undergraduate will do the November move. The interesting thing is, I've heard it was quite disruptive and difficult but all the tutors I'm asking, the Diploma tutors were teaching a unit, 'Ach, no problem. It was not disruptive', no." (Architecture Course Leader)

There was a continued sense of neglect reported by people left behind in the old Architecture building. However, the Dean commented privately that he was happy for the old building to feel dead as then people cannot wait to move to the new building. Dividing the Architecture faculty provided a form of sensebreaking. Only by letting go

of their much loved home could they reunite; people seemed to realise that they were more wedded to each other than to the building.

> "... I don't know how it is in other subjects but it's just strong that foundation, undergraduate and graduate and they mix ... and stuff is going on and you can just go on and see it. So I think we miss that because I think we perceive ourselves as a whole…It is like a family. If you know the teenagers go to university and you've only got the little ones left it just changes the whole dynamic doesn't it." (Architecture Course Leader)

**Table 6-4 Living the Claims**

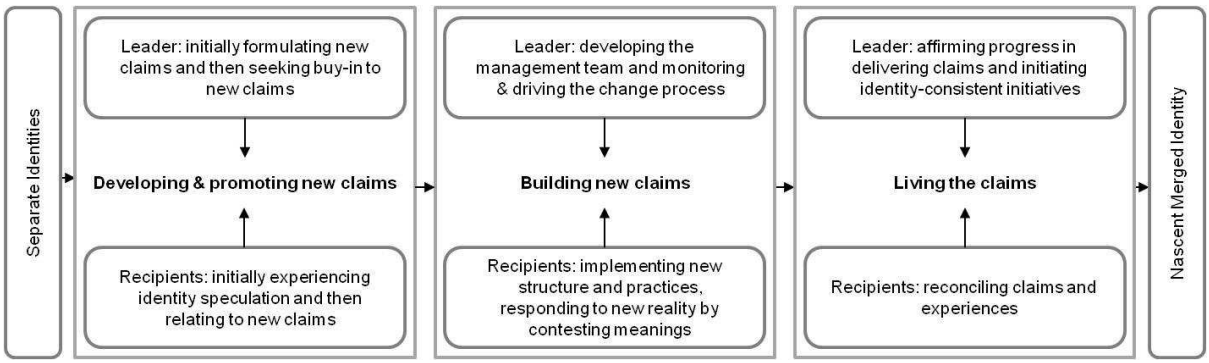
| **Living the claims** | |
|---|---|
| Affirming progress in delivering claims (leader)<br>• Reiterating similarities<br>• Extending claims 'Europe's leading' and 'Bauhaus' | Reiterate: "the re-working of the Nash name and building has been received as really positive, and you already ... all the time now, everybody says the Nash. Which is unbelievably quick for it to have happened given it was only launched 6-months ago..." (Dean)<br>Speaking of the shared building the Dean states: "There is an intimacy and authenticity about it… it has a cultivated awkwardness to it." (Dean – News article)<br>Extend: "This will perfectly position the Nash to [potentially become] one of Europe's leading creative institutions." (Dean Newsletter)<br>"described rather heroically by our own [lecturer] as the...[locality] Bauhaus..." (Dean) |
| Initiating identity consistent Initiatives (leader)<br>• Quality improvement still needed<br>• New cross faculty initiatives | Quality: "No. Unfortunately, a lot of the areas of the [Art & Design] have run at such a slow pace for so long that I do not believe that they have the ability, however much training we do to get them to the level that we need to be what we need to be." (Dean)<br>Initiatives: "There were three pieces of unfinished business, which have remained unfinished. One was that [History and Theory] which was seen as a separate section has happened but hasn't been communicated and celebrated as such ... So they're not surprises."(Dean) |
| Reconciling claims and experiences (recipients)<br>• SP: deeper understanding of claims, acknowledging survival and prosperity<br>• LP: reconciled to change, eager for reunion on single site | "I think the studio system went well in terms of ownership and belief for the school for the students and for the staff. I think there were some niggles but nowhere near as extreme as I might have feared..." (A&D School Head)<br>"Fine art has its own dynamism rightly and wrongly. Some bits of it work, some bits are a bit chaotic but it has taken on, slightly belatedly, the new structures in terms of studios and done so well and they've been very successful and they've been positive with the students, there's been bits where it hasn't worked and that's sort of inevitable." (A&D FMG Member)<br>"But given that it was kind of this big bang change last year … And I remember at the end of term this year, you know, recently, he kind of said, "Well, well done. We actually kind of managed to get through this without any major problems." (A&D Course leader)<br>"In principle I think it's a good system, it's a good idea. However, it does mean things are a little bit inflexible and it means that… the difficulty is knowing what we have to do across the board and knowing what's flexible that we can do for ourselves. And it's never …It |

| | |
|---|---|
| | sometimes is not always clear." (A&D Course Leader)<br>"We should feel very different next year because when we start in September I'll know what my studio is, I'll know what my new modules are having delivered them. So I think it will be easier and more enjoyable. I'll be able to do more with the students because I'll be more confident." (A&D Course leader)<br>"I think we should be closer together…There always are some things which I need to ask… and if we had been in the same location, I could just have quickly asked." (Architecture FMG Member)<br>"I'm sure if [undergraduates] do move for December then they will all have forgotten by the end of the year that they ever were here." (Architecture FMG Member) |

### *6.5.4 Summary process model*

The findings above are also presented as a summary process model in Figure 6-3. This is derived from the data structure (see Figure 6-2) and shows the process of change from two separate organisational identities to a nascent merged identity. This summarises both the change leader activity and recipient response over time, and how this differs over three sequential phases of change. This is explored in more depth in the discussion section.

**Figure 6-3 Process model of Deliberate Organisational Identity Change**




## 6.6 Discussion

This research considers how senior executives intentionally drive a process of organisational identity change, and how they can facilitate this process through discursive, material and work practice interventions. I do this in the context of merger. I develop a process model of deliberate organisational identity change (Figure 6-3) which identifies how organisational identity change occurs through three sequential phases of 'developing and promoting new claims', 'building new claims' and 'living the claims'. I find that deliberate identity change is an experienced based process. I show that the transition to a new shared organisational identity can be

intentionally shaped through this phased approach in which the change leader first develops and promotes new claims, and then puts in place a series of interventions which leads organisational members through an experiential based process which both realise the claims in the their work practices and facilitate their understanding of the meanings of the new claims. I show how this process is carefully orchestrated over time to monitor and influence recipient understanding, and how recipients' everyday behaviours and choices begin to align with the new claims. This process models makes a number of contributions. First, it builds on the existing and limited studies of planned identity change to identify a process through which identity change can be facilitated; second, it enables us to identify differences in how labels-based and meaning-based identity change occurs. Third, it identifies the role of close management involvement in sensegiving to facilitate directed sensemaking; fourth, it explains the extent to which ambiguity facilitates a deliberate identity change process and fifth, it identifies differences in the role of materiality during labels-based and meanings-based change.

The first contribution is that I identify a process by which intentional organisational identity change occurs. Two aspects of this process are key: the first is the phasing in which first new claims are developed and communicated and second a process is put in place which facilitates the development of meanings consistent with the intent of the design. The second aspect is that developing and promoting new claims is a discursive process whereas the development of meanings moves beyond a discursive process to also include material and work practice interventions. As I point out in the literature review there are a limited number of other studies that explore planned processes of organisational identity change. Consistent with Fiol (2002), I find that radical organisational identity change requires changes to claims and also changes to meanings. Also consistent with Fiol (2002) I find phasing where the new claims come first and the attachment of meanings to those claims comes second. I find differently to Fiol (2002) that, rather than meanings developing experimentally, the leaders of an organisational identity change process can facilitate the development of meanings. In Fiol (2002), meaning making is through a largely unguided process of experimentation which leads to identity fragmentation whilst, in this study, meaning making is supported through activities which are carefully designed to encourage recipients to develop meanings that are in line with the

claims and with the change leaders intent.

A phasing in organisation identity change of the development of new claims followed by development of meanings is also seen in Ravasi and Phillips (2011) and Ravasi and Schultz (2006) studies of deliberate organisational identity change. This case moves beyond the discursive communication of claims and meanings found in these studies, however, to show a phased process in which new labels are set out discursively, but are then followed with the introduction of activities alongside ongoing communication that guide people in attaching appropriate meanings to claims, and in making choices in their everyday practices which are in line with the claims. It is the dual focus on both the leader of the identity change process and the recipients, and the tracking of that through time, that enables me to extend Ravasi and Phillips (2011) and Ravasi and Schultz (2006) to show that the attachment of meaning moves beyond a discursive process. I also find this phasing supports Corley and Gioia (2004) who argue that cognition seems to matter more at the launch stage of identity change, whilst action is needed for changes to take hold. These findings advance their findings by demonstrating how this takes place in practice and how the type of sensegiving differs between label-based and meanings-based change.

The second contribution of this study is to identify differences in the nature of labels based and meanings based organisation identity change, and particularly how meanings based change occurs. In particular, my findings extend the work of Howard-Grenville et al. (2013) who argue that experience rather than cognition is key in driving identity change. I find that discursive sensegiving practices to share and promote new claims are more important during the labels-based phase of identity change. Consistent with existing studies (for example Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006) I find this discursive promotion of new claims in the first phase happens through, for example, newsletters and speeches and presentations at formal face to face communication events. In my case, this included context specific events such as the opening of the summer exhibition and the graduation ceremony. However, I also identify a persistence in the promotion of the new claims by the change leader beyond the labels based phase and throughout the change process that then supports the subsequent development of new meanings

for these. In terms of the promotion and communication of new claims, consistent with Ravasi and Schultz (2006) and Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) I find that material artefacts also support the discursive promotion of new claims. For example, mock ups, such as building models and floor plans, are visually appealing and are used in presentations and left on public display to promote the claims.

I find that, by comparison, meanings-based change, in the second and third phases of the identity change process, is achieved through the introduction of new working practices that realise the claims through embedding them in every day actions. For example, a range of new working practices were introduced in A&D. This included the studio system where staff had to pitch their studio and receive votes from students, mid-year 'crits' where student work (and by proxy, staff performance) from across the faculty could be judged and compared, and a faculty-wide process of moderating marks. The new practices helped to realise the identity claims by enabling people to experience for themselves what the claims mean in practice. I find that experiencing an identity change through changes to what people do every day generated an active sensemaking mode in which recipients were forced to make choices and question what the identity change means for them. Similarly, Howard-Grenville et al. (2013) argue that orchestrated experiences, such as a big track event, help people to experience an identity in a way that is more powerful than talk and ideas. I extend this by showing how experience-based activities can be orchestrated to drive the meaning-making phase of an intentional identity change.

This process of meanings based change is supported materially, through changes to the physical environment and discursively, through ongoing promotion of claims by the change leader and continued interaction between the managers and change recipients. However, in the meanings-based phases of the identity change I find that materiality takes on a different form from the labels-based phase. In the meaning-development phases, consistent with Whiteman and Cooper (2011) who demonstrate how environmental topography provides cues for sensegiving, the physical environment was used to subtly and deliberately enable, constrain and shape interaction in line with the claims. In this phase materiality is supporting the new experiences. For example, in my study the change leader designed the new building with the explicit intent to use it to represent the new faculty identity, but also

to be instrumental in delivering the identity claims through the design of internal boulevards and spaces in ways that changed working practices in an identity consistent way, in particular encouraging changes in patterns of interaction. He also changed the physical environment by co-locating FMG to an open plan workspace to shape and encourage interaction and help them develop as a united management team.

The third contribution is that I identify the need for close manager involvement, over time, in a deliberate process of identity change to provide sustained sensegiving that creates a more facilitated, shepherded and directed form of sensemaking. I find that such close engagement by the change leader helps to drive through the identity change as it was originally designed and intended. Balogun and Johnson (2004) demonstrate that, in the absence of senior management involvement, middle managers will engage in unguided sense making among themselves, leading to unintended consequences for the change process. Furthermore, Nag et al. (2007) argue that because identity is embedded in members everyday working practices, identity change leaders needs to engage with people at this level. In both Nag et al. (2007) and Balogun and Johnson (2004) the change leaders fail to do this effectively, whilst in my case, this was achieved by the change leader carefully selecting and then coaching and managing the management team (FMG) through his many and regular meetings with them, providing him with a means for close monitoring and close discursive communication of this leadership group. This then provided the management team with consistent messages and shaped their individual sensegiving in their everyday interactions with their own teams.

Close manager involvement was also achieved through managers acting as role models. Consistent with others (Corley and Gioia 2004; Howard-Grenville et al. 2013; Whiteman and Cooper 2011) I similarly find that acting as identity carriers or role models was an important form of manager sensegiving which shaped recipient sensemaking. For example, the Head of Design headed her own studio and was thus able to instil confidence that the system worked, and the management team showed that everyone needs to help out, even with the menial jobs, by hanging work for the summer exhibition and afterwards collecting empty beer bottles.

A fourth contribution concerns the role of ambiguity in the process of deliberate

identity change and the extent to which ambiguity actually facilitates the identity change process. Some studies (Corley and Gioia 2004; Fiol 2002; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia et al. 2000) place an emphasis on the role of ambiguity in triggering the sensemaking required for identity change to occur. Gioia et al. (2012) argue that a vaguely stated vision at the launch stage can help to generate an appeal to a wide range of stakeholders. This would seem to hold in my case where there was some ambiguity inherent in the label-based change. The early public statements by the change leader were vague, focussing on broad claims that appealed to both faculties, such as being 'socially engaged' or having a 'common curriculum' or 'a studio system', without going into detail about what this was and the scale of change required. However, in my case the change leader was seeking to use ambiguity to generate early enthusiasm and alleviate anxiety, rather than to invoke anxiety-inducing loss of meaning to generate a 'sensegiving imperative', as in Corley and Gioia (2004). In the literature review I also note differences in existing studies of deliberate identity change with regard to the role of ambiguity in meanings based change. Meanings ambiguity is seen as facilitative of identity change in Gioia and Thomas (1996) and also in Fiol (2002), whilst in Ravasi and Schultz (2006) and Ravasi and Phillips (2011) communication is designed to provide clarity and reduce ambiguity. My findings are consistent with Ravasi and Schultz (2006) and Ravasi and Phillips (2011) where ambiguity is not seen as facilitative and effort is made to deliberately develop clarity and common understanding of meanings.

The final contribution is to the literature on sensemaking and change more generally and the role of materiality. Consistent with Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) I identify that material artefacts can play a supportive role in discursive sensegiving, such as during the labels-based phase of my model, providing visual representations and tangible sensegiving cues. In an extension of their findings I also identify that materiality can in addition provide a more instrumental and substantive sensegiving role, such as in the two subsequent phases of my model, that facilitates meaning development through - enabling, constraining and shaping recipient experiences. Thus I identify that the role of material artefacts changes between developing new claims and attaching meanings to the claims. During the labels-based phase material artefacts supported discursive communication (Ravasi and Schultz 2006; Stigliani and Ravasi 2012). In my case, rather than provide links to the past (Ravasi and

Schultz 2006), material artefacts are representational of the future and help to generate early enthusiasm for the claims by illustrating aspects of the new identity that people might be expected to view positively, long before these were realised during the meanings-based phase. For example, models showed a building with collaborative spaces for working together and identical exhibition catalogues projected a sense of similarity between the two faculties.

In the meanings-based phase, materiality took on a more substantive and a more instrumental sensegiving role, shaping action as well as cognition. My findings support Ravasi and Phillips (2011) who argue that people are more likely to revise their beliefs, in line with the claims, if those claims are not just words but are given substance through material anchoring. Anchoring is a consistency between the claims and material structures, including organisational structures and capabilities, resulting from identity-consistent strategic investments (Ravasi and Phillips 2011). In my case, both the website and the newly refurbished building provided substantive identity-consistent strategic investments that helped to anchor the claims. The website, for example, provided the look and feel of a single, world class Art & Architecture faculty. My findings are also consistent with Howard-Grenville et al. (2013) who argue that tangible resources are used to provide orchestrated experiences, such as a big track event, which can be instrumental in shaping identity understandings in line with the identity claims. In my case, for example, the change leader designed the newly refurbished building like a neighbourhood to encourage interaction, and co-located FMG into a shared office space in order to encourage collaboration. In setting up the new website people were actively encouraged to populate and use the site, for example, by setting up an area for their own course or a biography. The site was instrumental in shaping identity understanding as it was formatted in line with the identity claims and people could see what others, such as FMG, had uploaded. The two forms of material sensegiving I observe in this phase, substantive and instrumental, represent both a social actor view of organisational identity residing in substantive and credible claims, and a social constructionist view, where identity develops through shared understanding and recipient meaning making, and supports those that argue that the two are inextricably linked (Gioia et al. 2010; Howard-Grenville et al. 2013; Ravasi and Schultz 2006).

My findings also suggest that absence or loss of material artefacts (including people) seems to play an important role in shaping sensemaking for change recipients, perhaps because of both the practical and symbolic meaning attached to the loss. This is consistent with Gioia et al. (1994) who argue that symbols, including discursive such as metaphor, physical such as a logo, or action such as an event, can have an expressive role, as a medium for sensemaking, but can also be instrumental in shaping and influencing action. In my case, the removal of well-established, culturally consistent symbols, particularly people and locations, played a role in the change. This also supports Ravasi and Schultz (2006) who argue that, organisational identity claims provide people with a sense of continuity. For new identity claims to be supported, they need to be embedded in the organisational history and culture (Ravasi and Schultz 2006). In my case for example, the physical absence of people from the old Architecture building made the historic practice of interaction between undergraduate and postgraduate students difficult, increased the sense of neglect, and in terms of action, increased the desire to move to the new building. The absence of chairs and tables from the building at the start of term made normal teaching practices difficult. It was interpreted as a symbolic example of poor basic management. The removal of FMG from the same building as other faculty members meant that non-FMG members could no longer drop in casually to chat. This was initially viewed by some as creating a level of formality, or more symbolically an ‘ivory tower’.

### 6.7 Boundary Conditions

I have established a framework which accounts for how change leaders can facilitate a process of deliberate identity change. I have studied one example of this, and have done so within one particular type of organisation. A number of boundary conditions therefore define the extent to which the process outlined in this paper can be more widely generalised. First, the study concerns an internal merger. This raises questions as to the extent to which the findings will apply to external mergers, or other types of strategic change. In addition, the study is in an academic setting, where strong and appealing identity claims that can unite may be more important. It is also a context in which the merging faculties could be united around core values. Thus the findings may not apply to how deliberate organisation identity can be facilitated across, say, a wider range of faculties in the case of an identity change

process extending across a university. Other boundary conditions that may prevent the findings here being generalisable, are that some organisations may not have the resources to materially anchor claims, or may find 'close management' difficult due to practical geographical constraints. Others, as in the corporate spin off and merger examples (Clark et al. 2010; Corley and Gioia 2004), may find government 'quiet periods' limit leaders ability to engage in sensegiving communication with employees. On the other hand, similarities with other studies of deliberate organisational identity change (Fiol 2002; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006), suggests that the generalisability of this study may extend more widely. Like these studies, I also find that it is important to establish a clear set of claims against which new meanings can be developed, and the importance of discursive sensegiving in this. However, my study goes further through exploring not just what the change leader is doing, but the way recipients respond, and that is what has enabled me to explore the experiential nature of the change process.

### 6.8 Future Research

I have studied deliberate identity change in a merger. Further research should explore deliberate identity change in other change contexts to see the extent to which these findings are generalisable. For example, research should explore deliberate identity change in geographically dispersed organisations to identify how 'close management' can be achieved, if at all, and what replaces it, in such contexts. Studies of organisations facing retrenchment or financial difficulties would help to understand how claims are substantiated when there is no investment to support material anchoring, or even how forward looking and inspiring claims are developed in such contexts. In addition, my study, along with that of Howard-Grenville et al. (2013) are the first two studies to really show the experiential nature of the meaning-making aspect of organisation identity change processes. Future research should focus on this in more depth.

### 6.9 Conclusions and Implications for Practice

I set out to explain how, in an internal merger, an identity change is facilitated by the change leader through discursive as well as material and work practice interventions. I used a sensemaking perspective to answer this question and this approach led me to examine both change leader actions and the recipient response. In answer to the

question I developed a process model of deliberate organisational identity change. The findings led me to conclude that identity change can be deliberately managed and that this process is likely to be phased and to be different for the management of new claims and attachment of new meanings. In my study the development of new labels benefitted from a discursive sensegiving approach whilst the attachment of new meanings benefitted from a more experience based approach and close management by the change leader of the management team. These findings also have implications for practice. First they suggest that managers need to consider identity issues upfront and focus on establishing a clear set of claims as a start point. Second, the change process should be clearly phased with use of different interventions in different phases. Managers should initially focus on developing new claims through discursive practices. They should then move on to focus on development of appropriate meanings through new work practices and other identity consistent experiences that help people to develop meanings in line with the new claims. There is a need to initiate meaning development and reinforce and embed it. Managers should initially support their claims with material artefacts that represent the new identity, and then develop tangible resources that facilitate meaning-making by both anchoring the claims and enabling new experiences. Managers should also closely manage the identity change process. This can be achieved through regular meetings and careful selecting and coaching of the wider leadership team.

# Chapter 7: Identity Work

## 7.1 Introduction

Whilst organisational identity as explored in the previous chapter is concerned with a shared understanding about 'who we are as an organisation' (Albert and Whetten 1985), individual identity is a more self-reflexive concern with 'who I am' (Coupland and Brown 2012). Just as organisational identity can be central to strategic change, so individual identity can influence the way recipients respond to strategic change efforts when the new goals, purpose and mission, and their implications for, for example, organisational identity, culture, systems and work practices, challenge individual identity. Alvesson (2010) and Brown (2015) note that whilst some researchers view individual identity as relatively stable and fixed over time, others see it as relatively fluid and changing. Recent studies suggest that identity can change over a comparatively short time frame (Beech 2006; Brown 2015; Coupland and Brown 2012; Gotsi et al. 2010; Watson 2008), particularly during times of intense change marked by uncertainty, complexity and self-doubt which leads people to examine who they are (Alvesson et al. 2008; Brown 2015). This is important for strategy researchers and practitioners alike because these individual identity issues are often triggered by strategic change and can impact the change process (Empson 2004; Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2016; Langley et al. 2012; Mallett and Wapshott 2012; Reissner 2010; Thomas and Linstead 2002).

Both 'identity work' and 'identity regulation' have largely been studied through discursive practices (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Beech 2008; Clarke et al. 2009; Kuhn 2006; McInnes and Corlett 2012; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003; Watson 2009a; Ybema et al. 2009). However, a small number of studies demonstrate that other non-discursive practices, such as work practices or space, can also impact how people construct their identities (Alvesson et al. 2008; Beech 2008; Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wasserman and Frenkel 2011; Wieland 2010). Research from a 'struggle' perspective has tended to adopt a critical stance (Alvesson 2010). We know that top down, imposed identity regulation, which is incongruent with self-identity, is likely to lead to resistance, withdrawal, criticism and unintended consequences for organisational outcomes (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown and Humphreys 2006; Brown et al. 2010; Thomas and Davies 2005). On the

other hand, a small number of studies have also hinted that identity regulation could be a more neutral or even a 'positive' influence on identity work and self-identity (Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wieland 2010). However, we know little about how imposed regulation might, in some circumstances, provide 'positive' identity resources that influence individual identity change in ways which also align with intended strategic change outcomes.

In fact we still know very little about how identity struggles evolve over time as few studies take a longitudinal consideration of identity change, despite calls for more work of this nature (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown 2015; Langley et al. 2012). Furthermore, whilst studies have pointed to non-discursive forms of identity regulation and identity work, we still also know little about non-discursive forms and less still about their importance over time or their interplay with more discursive practices. Finally, we also have little understanding of how identity regulation might provide a 'positive' resource for self-identity work during periods of change which invoke anxiety, uncertainty and self-doubt. Only a small number of studies take a more neutral stance on identity regulation (Langley et al. 2012; Wieland 2010).

My research explores the interplay between identity regulation and identity work during strategic change. The study is based on a longitudinal two-year case study. I focus on a period of significant strategic change, an internal merger between an Art & Design faculty and an Architecture faculty. I follow an abductive approach (Cunliffe 2011; Gioia et al. 2013; Klag and Langley 2013; Welch et al. 2013). Consistent with prior research on strategic change and mergers, as the change process developed identity issues started to surface (Clark et al. 2010; Empson 2004; Mantere et al. 2012). In addition, the identity work and struggles were triggered and revolved around the significant changes to practices as much as any forms of discursive regulation, such as the imposition of different lecturing practices in the Art & Design faculty which are strongly associated with the Architecture faculty, and through new forms of managerial practices associated with a stronger focus on strategic leadership. Also, whilst the Dean and his actions created a lot of pain and identity struggles, I found that faculty members, through their identity work, were able to develop an enhanced self-identity; and to do so in ways that also appeared to help the merger to progress in line with the Dean's change plan. Thus this paper explores

how identity work evolves over time, focussing particularly on the role of non discursive forms of regulation, such as work practice and space, and the way that identity work helped the change process. This is important as research points to the importance of non-discursive practices in identity construction (Alvesson et al. 2008; Beech 2008; Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wasserman and Frenkel 2011; Wieland 2010), yet only a small number of studies, such as Langley et al. (2012), explore non-discursive forms of identity regulation. Identity literature also reveals that imposed identity regulation will tend to have a 'negative' impact on self-identity, invoking resistance and unintended consequences for the change process (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown and Humphreys 2006; Brown et al. 2010; Thomas and Davies 2005). Thus, it is also important to add to the small number of studies which look at the way identity struggles lead to 'neutral' or surprisingly 'positive' outcomes for self-identity that align with the intentions of the change process (Langley et al. 2012; Wieland 2010).

My study provides a detailed narrative account of a process of individual identity change. My findings enable me to contribute to the literature on identity work in a number of ways. First, I develop a summary process model which explains how individual identity change occurred over time. Second, I show that work practices are important in both regulating identity and in how people respond through their identity work. Third, I explain how identity change that leads to painful identity struggle, surprisingly ends with people experiencing an enhancing self-identity change that seems to align with the intention of the change process, through identity regulation which combines both work practices and discursive forms. Fourth, I contribute to a small number of studies that explain how space can operate as a form of identity regulation.

### 7.2 Theoretical Background

Brown (2015:20) defines individual identity as "people's subjectively construed understandings of who they were, are and desire to become". Within the field of management, research has focussed on different types of workplace identities such as managerial (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003; Watson 2009b), professional (Cohen et al. 2005; Empson 2004; Pratt et al. 2006) occupational (Ashcraft 2013; Fraher and Gabriel 2014; Nelson and Irwin 2014) or more broadly, as adopted in this

particular study, work identity or work-related identity (Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly 2014; Dutton et al. 2010). There is much debate around the nature of identity, for example, whether identity is relatively stable and enduring or more fluid (Alvesson 2010; Brown 2015). There is increasing evidence that individual self-identity in the work place can change over relatively short periods of time (Beech 2006; Brown 2015; Coupland and Brown 2012; Gotsi et al. 2010; Watson 2008). For example, Beech (2006:46), from a constructionist perspective, argues that identities "adapt to social contexts and are open to modification and social processes". From this perspective, individual or self-identities are constructed through 'identity work' which is defined as, "interpretive activity involved in reproducing and transforming self-identity" (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:627). Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003:1165) define 'identity work' as people, "being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness". These definitions position identity work as a cognitive, interpretive process where individuals try to make sense of who they are, their self-identity.

A growing body of research suggests that individual identity is shaped through an ongoing dynamic between external 'identity regulation' and internal 'identity work' through which individuals construct a self-identity (for example, Alvesson 2010; Alvesson et al. 2008; Coupland and Brown 2012; Garcia and Hardy 2007). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) argue that modern discourses such as service management and knowledge work have resulted in a greater focus by managers on regulating employees feelings and self-identity. They define 'identity regulation' as a form of organisational control through social practices, such as training, corporate communication or reward schemes, that trigger and influence individual identity work and resultant narratives of self-identity (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). However, few studies examine in detail the interplay between identity regulation and identity work as I do.

### *7.2.1 Identity Regulation and Identity Work as Discursive*

Existing research has tended to focus on identity regulation as a predominantly discursive practice (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Beech 2008), and research on identity work has often focussed on meanings that originate from available

discourses (Clarke et al. 2009; Kuhn 2006; McInnes and Corlett 2012; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003; Watson 2009a). However, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) acknowledge that practices, such as working on an assembly line, can also have an impact on an individual's self-identity. They suggest that in order to be a significant form of regulation, practices or discourses must have valency from the perspective of the recipient (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). Valency refers to a level of meaning intensity and ability to invoke an emotional response, such as anxiety or passion, which confirms or disrupts the recipient's existing self-identity (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). A small body of research reveals that individual identity is influenced by non-discursive resources such as the clothes people wear (Beech et al. 2008; Pratt et al. 2006) and organisational arrangements such as job roles, or a big corner office (Alvesson et al. 2008), work practices (Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wieland 2010) and space (Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012). In Gotsi et al. (2010) space is shown to be an important form of identity regulation as the layout of conference rooms and 'war rooms' differentiates artistic space from business-space and encourages people to foreground the business-like aspect of their identity. Research by Langley et al. (2012) demonstrates that discourse, practices and space, for example, moving furniture to create separation, are all important in crafting identities. Wieland (2010) demonstrates the importance of everyday situated practices in shaping identity work, such as the organisational practice of setting goals which regulates members towards an ideal self-identity as a 'deliverer'. Pratt et al. (2006) argue that professional identity is closely bound up with what people do and that identity change occurs when there is a mismatch between their work activities and their ideas about their professional identity. However, there is still very little research which considers the role of practices, space or other non-discursive elements in the regulation of identity and in identity work.

### *7.2.2 Identity Regulation and Identity Work as Struggle*

For Alvesson and Willmott (2002) the regulation of identity by management is a form of organisational control. Research from this perspective reveals that employees respond to these regulation attempts through forms of compliance or resistance (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Collinson 2003; Humphreys and Brown 2002; Thomas and Davies 2005). Alvesson and Willmott (2002:637) argue it is "naïve to assume that identity can be pushed in any direction without inertia, pain, resistance and

unintended consequences" and unpalatable identity regulation is likely to meet with resistance. Alvesson (2010) uses the metaphor of 'struggler' to categorise research where there is conflict or contradiction between the individual's self-identity and external regulatory demands or conditions that challenge that self-view. The struggler metaphor highlights the interplay between external identity regulation and individual identity work (Alvesson 2010).

Research from the Struggler perspective has tended to draw from critical management theory, exploring how employees resist or reinterpret regulation (Alvesson 2010). For example, Thomas and Davies (2005) show how a Head Teacher challenges a masculine, market based view of education. In Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) we see how an Administration Director in a Research & Development unit attempts to resist administration work, which she does not see as part of her managerial identity, by labelling it 'janitorial work'. This also reflects Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) focus on regulation as a form of top down management control. However, a small number of studies reveal that regulation and struggle also occurs through interaction with peers and is not simply top down (Langley et al. 2012; Wieland 2010). For example, in Wieland (2010), peers comment on who has met their goals and who hasn't, and walking quickly is seen as a means of demonstrating concern for completing tasks to peers. A small number of studies take a more 'neutral' view of regulation (Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Wieland 2010). In fact, Langley et al. (2012:161) suggest that identity regulation by managers "might include more positive resources for identity renewal". They suggest that skilful change managers might be able to anticipate identity issues and reposition changes in more positive ways that offer hope for identity renewal, and mitigate people's sense of identity loss during change (Langley et al. 2012). Similarly, Gotsi et al. (2010) argue that regulation is likely to engender resistance where it is perceived to be oppressive, but suggest that more skilful managerial efforts may enable recipients to construct a more 'positive' identity. Their study reveals that paradoxical approaches to regulation, through practices that both encourage integration of multiple identities and differentiation, can be enabling rather than constraining, and help people to cope with identity tensions (Gotsi et al. 2010). Dutton et al. (2010) demonstrate that positive identities, for example when hospital cleaners take on an identity as care providers, motivate people to act in ways that

provide positive organisational outcomes, such as displaying more willingness to help others. Whilst these studies are quite different from each other, they each hint at the possibility that individual identity regulation might, with skilful management, result in positive outcomes for the individual and the organisation. A final example is Pratt et al. (2006) where obligatory and intensive work practices during professional medical training, such as long hours and demeaning 'scut work', create 'work-identity integrity violations', which are analogous with identity struggles. However, for professionals it is argued that identity violations are motivators for identity construction. The obligatory nature of work activities, and the intense, controlled environment, means the identity of medical students, "is more likely to change to fit the work than vice versa" (Pratt et al. 2006:254).

Top down identity regulation has been shown to often lead to resistance (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Collinson 2003; Humphreys and Brown 2002; Thomas and Davies 2005). However, little existing work considers whether a change which promises the alluring prospect of a closer fit with the individual's self-identity or identity aspirations could act as a resource for identity work which supports individuals through a process of difficult identity change and enables individuals to trade-off difficult experiences today for a future desired self-identity. There are few studies which consider the struggler metaphor from a relatively neutral standpoint and consider how skilfully managed identity regulation might facilitate identity work which leads to positive identity renewal.

### *7.2.3 Where and when can identity work be observed?*

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) argue that identity work can take place in a range of contexts and that in complex and fragmented contexts, the process could be ongoing, whilst in stable contexts it may only arise during periods of significant change. We know that identity research has tended to focus on times of significant change as these are likely to lead to feelings of self-doubt and confusion which encourages self-examination (Alvesson et al. 2008; Brown 2015). In these change contexts, individual identity is important because issues that arise as a result of identity work can impact the strategic change process and outcomes (Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2016; Langley et al. 2012; Mallett and Wapshott 2012; Reissner 2010; Thomas and Linstead 2002). For example, Mallett and Wapshott (2012) show

how organisational change in a graphic design firm is perceived as a threat to personal identity and leads some managers to distance themselves from the changes. In Langley et al. (2012) attempts to develop 'critical care nurses' as part of a merger were undermined because 'surgical nurses' were reluctant to let go of an existing identity which they saw as superior, and adopt practices which they associated with inferior 'medical nurses'.

Mergers can take place between two legally separate organisations, for example, Clark et al. (2010) concerns a merger between two competing Healthcare organisations. Mergers can also take an internal or intra-organisational form, such as the merging of faculties within a university (Bartels et al. 2009) or districts within a religious order (Bartunek and Franzak 1988). In each case, mergers are of interest to strategic change researchers as they frequently involve radical change which can trigger second order (Bartunek 1984) change in recipients' interpretive schemes. Langley et al. (2012) argue that mergers often trigger issues of identity and make the struggling that people experience more clearly visible.

Merger studies are also ideally placed to respond to calls for research which takes a longitudinal consideration of identity change (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown 2015; Langley et al. 2012) as they take place over time and with relatively clearly demarcated phases and time boundaries. There is a small body of work that considers temporal aspects of individual identity construction, for example, Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari (2016) argue that 'role' is a mediator of identity work and examine role transitions over time. We also know from Ybema (2010) that identity work involves 'temporal self-understandings', where people make sense of who I am today through comparison with who I was in the past or who I hope to be in the future. Brown (2015) notes that there is virtually no research which explores any process of trading off or putting on hold one identity for a time, in order to work towards another. However, by looking at a merger over time, my research begins to address some of these concerns.

### *7.2.4 Creative Workers and Academics*

We know that creative workers experience internal identity tensions and can be challenging to manage (Beech et al. 2012; Brown et al. 2010; Cohen et al. 2005; Gotsi et al. 2010). Thus, they provide a promising focal point to observe identity

struggles arising from the interplay between identity work and identity regulation, particularly if they are experiencing significant identity regulation. Similarly, existing studies of academics have tended to focus on issues such as modernisation, market forces, and managerialist audit and control processes to explore the negative impact and tension between academic identity and regulation (Brown and Humphreys 2006; Clarke et al. 2012; Clarke and Knights 2015; Garcia and Hardy 2007; Humphreys and Brown 2002; Knights and Clarke 2014). For example, in Garcia and Hardy (2007), identity regulation leads academics to see themselves as victims of change which gives them the right to moral indignation and to criticise the managers who have introduced the regulation. Humphreys and Brown (2002) consider an attempt by senior academic managers to impose an identity narrative on to a faculty and the reaction of faculty members. In this case, only the existing senior managers and newly recruited staff members demonstrate identification with the new narrative, the rest displaying some form of disquiet, withdrawal or resistance (Humphreys and Brown 2002). Academic and creative contexts afford an opportunity to observe identity tension. However, there are relatively few studies of this nature and fewer still where imposed identity regulation is presented as attractive, leading to enhanced individual self-identity.

### *7.2.5 Research Problem*

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) invite researchers to use in-depth, longitudinal methods to look at identity work in close relation to identity regulation. I contribute to the limited number of longitudinal studies examining identity struggles during a period of strategic change, in this case a merger between an Art & Design and Architecture faculty. Cycling between the data and the literature I noticed two key areas that seemed to be interesting and surprising. Firstly, that existing literature hints at practices as important but in this case they seem particularly so. Secondly, that existing studies tend to take a view of 'struggle' as something leading to inertia or resistance which often results in unintended consequences for the change process. However in this case, the Dean's identity regulation put people through pain and identity struggle but they seemed to develop an enhanced self-identity over time, and to do so in ways which seemed to help the merger to progress in line with the Dean's plan. In each of these two areas, I wanted to know why and to understand what the implications are for theory. I felt that attempting to answer these questions would be

a fruitful way to explore the data and to make a meaningful contribution to existing understanding about the nature of identity work and the role of identity work in the change process.

### 7.3 Case Study and Methods

This research draws on a longitudinal, two year study of an internal merger between an Art & Design and Architecture faculty within a UK university that was granted university status in 1992. A single exploratory case is suitable as I am studying a phenomenon which is poorly understood (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Yin 2013). I adopt an abductive approach (Cunliffe 2011; Gioia et al. 2013; Klag and Langley 2013; Welch et al. 2013) as this is appropriate where both data-driven and theory-driven approaches are used iteratively or simultaneously. Klag and Langley (2013) explain that abductive research draws on existing literature for stimulation and resonance, whilst staying open to anomalies or surprises in the data that can generate insight.

The merger began with the appointment of the Dean of Architecture as conjoint Dean of both faculties. At the time, the Architecture faculty was seen as more prestigious and more successful than Art & Design and attracted students with significantly higher entry grades. The new Dean expressed his determination to ensure that the merger did not have an adverse impact the reputation of Architecture whilst raising the quality and reputation of Art & Design. He argued that much of the success of Architecture was due to the faculty's work practices, such as a studio teaching system, which encouraged internal competition and external scrutiny. His merger plan involved the adoption by Art & Design of many of the academic practices of Architecture, plus investment in refurbishing the Art & Design building and developing a new shared organisation identity, distinct from the main university. He planned that the changes would be implemented by the faculty management team (FMG) who would be encouraged to 'step up' as more strategic leaders, whilst the Dean monitored and encouraged them through regular fortnightly meetings. The Dean presented his vision of a more prestigious merged faculty with new practices that were much more sympathetic to the creative arts. The new practices and their implementation had most impact on Art & Design as, unlike Architecture, they had operated a more traditional modular based curriculum in the past, in line with the rest

of the university. Thus, I focus particularly on how the changes shaped the identity work of individuals within Art & Design over the merger period.

### *7.3.1 Data Collection*

I had extensive access to the case site and collected data in real-time for two years. This allowed 'deep immersion' (Jarzabkowski et al. 2015; Jarzabkowski et al. 2014; Ravasi and Canato 2013) in the site both formally through interviews and attendance at meetings but also through regularly dropping in to exhibitions, talks and events. Between October 2011 and September 2013, 98 interviews were conducted which each lasted an average of one hour. The interviews were unstructured (Lincoln and Guba 1985) and included a series of prompts around people's career history and recent experiences at the university and moved on to their experiences of the merger. Faculty Management Group meetings took place initially weekly, and then fortnightly. I attended 51 FMG meetings over the two years. All the minutes and documents were collected and the meetings were audio recorded and extensive field notes taken. In addition 64 other meetings were formally attended. These included meetings chaired by members of FMG, such as School meetings and cross faculty meetings, and more ad-hoc meetings that were either chaired by the Dean or run at the Dean's request. These meetings were observed and recorded in a similar way to the FMG meeting. These were attended on a more occasional basis to observe FMG members and their teams in interaction. More informal interactions such as attending exhibitions and events (about 17) and 'corridor conversations' were recorded as field notes. In addition key documents were collected such as reports, presentations, press coverage, web pages, photographs of building changes, posters and signage.

### *7.3.2 Data Analysis*

From my immersion in the field and reading through all the interview transcripts I had established that the new practices and their implementation had most impact on Art & Design (both course leaders and FMG members), including quotes relating to issues of identity, such as, "what am I doing, who the hell am I anymore!". I began by selecting a purposive sample (Lincoln and Guba 1985) of ten research participants from within the Art & Design faculty who were both typical cases and representative of a range of different voices and experiences at both FMG level (Academic Management - Academic Leader and Associate Dean level) and non FMG

(Academic - Senior Lecturer level). To this end, I selected five Academics and five Academic Managers. Within the lecturer sample I selected people teaching a range of different subjects and from both the Fine Art and Design School, and within Academic Managers I included people with predominantly a School Role (such as Head of Design or Fine Art) and people with a cross-faculty role (such as the Head of Recruitment and Marketing). I used the interview data primarily, and supplemented this with other data such as meetings, events and informal conversations, to develop detailed narrative accounts (Langley 1999; Van Maanen 1979) of each person's experience of the change process. In this way the sample of 10 provided a good balance of the different disciplines and roles but also enabled me to draw more widely on the extensive data collected. An example individual narrative is contained in Appendix B. I focussed on issues of identity such as losing a sense of who I am or doing something that does not fit with my thoughts about who I am. For example,

> *"I've never felt so out of my depth... I feel suddenly that my competence has been almost like pulled out from under me... I just felt I was disappearing." (Manager)*

As I examined the data more closely I found that the identity accounts from academics were quite similar to each other but significantly different from academic managers. I then developed a single narrative account for all the academics, using the composite narrative technique (Dunford and Jones 2000; Sonenshein 2010; Vaara and Tienari 2011) that documented patterns in their identity construction experiences over time, particularly their pre-merger identity, how their identity was challenged through the Dean's regulation during the merger, their identity work in response to regulation during the merger, and their identity at the end of the research period. A similar exercise was completed for academic managers.

At this stage I moved on to analyse the identity issues in the main phases of the merger separately, beginning with pre-merger identity, and identifying common categories at a more conceptual level for academics (summarised in Table 7-1 in the findings) and for managers (summarised in Table 7-2 in the findings). My analysis revealed that academics had a primary work identity as both expert and experienced academic lecturers but also as specialist practitioners or researchers within their particular Arts field. I identified that this predominant identity was undermined in three main ways, which included closure threats to Arts courses at the university and more widely across the UK. I also identified that academics' pre-merger identity was

strengthened in a number of ways, for example, through their relationship with their students. Looking for patterns in the pre-merger identity of academic managers I found that they had a predominant work identity as experienced and competent managers. I went on to identify ways in which this identity was undermined, for example, when managers were excluded from strategic decisions, and ways in which it was strengthened, for example, through blaming issues within the faculty on the senior team.

I then moved on to look for evidence of identity struggles during the merger process and used existing literature to sensitise me to typical types of activity that might be associated with my area of interest (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). For example, I looked for incidents or issues which generated a sense of anxiety or strong emotion (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) and where there was evidence of people striving to reconcile a contradiction or conflict between their self-view and the demands of the change process (Alvesson 2010; Watson 2008). One typical instance was a manager, who saw herself as a team-player, trying to make sense of her own negative feelings about moving into a large shared office.

> *"I don't find it easy being in the big, shared office…I know that's very much not the ethos, I can see that architecturally, symbolically to have your own office is to say, 'I have a different status to you'. But when I work with people, I am much more flat."*

I then started to work iteratively, exploring each struggle and trying to make linkages between the nature of the regulation and the nature of the identity work that it was prompting to understand what was provoking particular struggles. I identified different forms of regulation, again using examples and definitions from existing literature as a sensitising guide (for example, Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Beech 2008; Langley et al. 2012; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003), and mindful that regulation might be enacted through both discursive and non-discursive means. For example, I identified that for academics regulation took discursive forms such as 'creating a vision' where the Dean articulated a common set of values for the new organisation. However, I also observed that regulation frequently occurred through changes to practices such as introducing new curriculum changes and teaching practices. For managers, whilst the precise nature of the regulation differed, identity regulation also frequently occurred through new practices as well as discursively, but practice to do with

leadership and management, for example, testing managers to see if they had leadership capability. At the end of this stage I had identified six discrete identity struggles experienced by academics that each involved significant identity work and centred on a particular area of identity regulation (see Table 7-3). By coincidence rather than design, I identified a similar number of struggles that were experienced by managers, although the exact nature of these six was different (see Table 7-4). For the purpose of analysis, I have presented each struggle as a separate unit with a specific regulatory trigger but inevitably there is, in reality, a level of overlap between them.

Despite the sense of identity struggle, I found that much of the identity work which was triggered helped to progress the change process in line with the Dean's merger plans. For example, managers tried to retain their sense of competence by striving to meet the high expectations of the Dean. To explore this further, I looked at how the individual identity of academics and managers had evolved by the end of the change process (see Table 7-7 and Table 7-8 in the findings section). I noticed that, by the end of the change period, the identity struggles appeared to have been largely resolved or dissipated and that participants' identity appeared to have been repaired or strengthened. So, for each of the struggles, I looked for evidence of whether it appeared to have been resolved or not and the nature of the resolution (also in Table 7-7 and Table 7-8). Finally, I used my findings to develop a process model based on the identity journey of both academics and academic managers (Figure 7-1 in the findings section).

## 7.4 Findings

This section considers the identity of academics and academic managers. For each I explore their identity journey in four phases: identity before the merger, how their identity is challenged through the Dean's regulation during the merger, how individuals respond to regulation through their identity work, and how their individual identity has evolved by the end of the change process.

### *7.4.1 Work Identity before the Merger*

Prior to the merger, both managers and academics appeared to have a predominant work identity that was undermined and strengthened in particular ways. I discuss this

here, firstly for academics and then for academic managers.

#### *7.4.1.1 Academics - Expert lecturers and Specialist Practitioners*

Academics appeared to have a primary work identity as expert and experienced academic lecturers, but also as specialist practitioners or researchers within their particular Arts field, such as Photography (see Table 7-1 for a summary of main points and supporting quotes). For example, academics expressed pride in the fact that they had successful practitioner careers prior to joining academia, or were still continuing to practice or to undertake research. Many worked part-time in order to continue their professional practice and voiced a level of disdain for people who were 'just academics'.

This predominant identity appeared to be undermined in three main ways. First, this was through the ethos of the faculty, as academics spoke about feeling neglected and under-valued, and referred to the senior team as remote and aggressive. The second factor related to the wider reputation of the university. The university and faculty had low overall student satisfaction and league table rankings and the faculty lacked many of the resources and facilities offered by rivals. Third, academics expressed awareness that wider trends in the sector such as an increase in university tuition fees in 2012 were impacting student numbers on Arts courses. The risk of course closure and job loss appeared to provide a low level but constant threat to their self-identity. There was also evidence to indicate that academics' pre-merger identity was strengthened in a number of ways. For example, the way they spoke about their relationship with their students and student attainment suggested that this was strongly linked to their identity as competent lecturer-practitioners. Their self-identity appeared to be bolstered by satisfied students, popular courses and high achievement levels. A second factor was related to local indicators such as their own personal success, for example, having their own work displayed in a prestigious gallery, or the success of their own specialist area in the REF (Research Excellence Framework). Finally, an advantage of management neglect was that lecturers' self-identity as competent lecturer-practitioners appeared to go largely unchallenged. Their self-identity may have been maintained, in part, because there was limited oversight at the level of everyday academic practice.

**Table 7-1 Pre-Merger Identity (Academics)**

| Pre Merger Identity | Description | Academics – supporting quotes |
|---|---|---|
| Predominant Work Identity | Expert lecturers and specialist practitioners | • *"I've been working for the university for forty years now." Academic5*<br>• *"I taught all over the country in all sorts of different places." Academic4*<br>• *"I was fairly experienced; I could get straight on with the teaching." Academic3*<br>• *"at least in Fine Arts, all the staff are practicing kind of artists, so that's good." Academic5*<br>• *"… in the old days, you'd have full-time members of staff who'd been there for years who weren't practicing artists, they would just, they were just academics." Academic5*<br>• *"[I've] worked with some of the most renowned architects, designers and artists in the world." Academic1* |
| Undermined By | Faculty Ethos | • *"…from the very first day…when they couldn't find me a desk…I was the new full time course leader, I just thought, nobody gives a stuff... nobody's got any time for you here." Academic3*<br>• *"We were then left with very poor management, kind of unsupported and in certain people's cases abusive, belligerent, bullying...That wasn't good." Academic5*<br>• *"The feeling was that the only information you got was criticism." Academic2* |
| | University & Faculty reputation | • *"The sense of kind of, you know, low self-esteem which sort of pervaded everybody over the years, sort of fed by management." Academic2*<br>• *"Have you seen [competitor Arts school]? Have you seen their new building?... it's mega... what a parent said to me, she was waiting in the lobby [of our building] with her kid and she said, 'I'm sorry but this feels like a 1970s post office'." Academic3*<br>• *"Someone like [competitor] would have spent more on light bulbs than our entire kind of budget for the year." Academic5* |
| | Long term threats to Arts courses | • *"Art schools generally speaking need quite a lot of space... funding generally speaking is cut". Academic5*<br>• *"So it's cuts, cuts, cuts and you're trying to do the same job on less." Academic5*<br>• *"I fought long and hard for [specialism] to stay open as a course and as soon as I wasn't in it they shut it." Academic4*<br>• *"I've been on the redundancy board twice, so why did they take me on?" Academic3* |
| Strengthened By | Student relationship & attainment | • *"We had people queuing around the block...got good results and those sorts of things." Academic5*<br>• *"I want to make the course bigger ... I want the place buzzing. That's what I've always wanted." Academic4* |
| | Local & individual esteem indicators | • *"In the last REF we did really well ... we [specialism] were mentioned as being internationally significant..." Academic5*<br>• *"This year alone, I've had about four exhibitions in galleries…So, I'm doing quite well." Academic4* |
| | Lack of detailed oversight | • *"She was supposed to give me a briefing for the job but she didn't do that for a month." Academic3*<br>• *"He knew what we did and that we could manage it properly and it was efficient and it ran and he was very much hands off." Academic5* |

#### *7.4.1.2 Academic Managers - Experienced and Competent Managers*

Academic managers appeared to have a predominant work identity as experienced and competent managers (see Table 7-2 for a summary of key points supporting quotes).

Whilst none had traditional management qualifications, such as a Masters in Business Administration, they spoke of attending training courses and of considerable years of management experience at a range of institutions. Their identity seemed to be undermined in broadly similar ways to the Faculty Management Group (FMG) but with differences at the detail level. For example, they also expressed concerns about the faculty ethos but these concerns related particularly to their exclusion from strategic decision making. Managers expressed dissatisfaction with their opportunities to carry out more strategic work and spoke of meetings that had been stopped and decisions being made behind closed doors. Comments about the university's rankings and reputation indicated that this was another area where manager's sense of identity esteem was undermined. The faculty was generally not well regarded within the arts community and, whilst there were still some pockets of more successful courses within the faculty, these were often based on a historic reputation that was now fading. Although their predominant identity was as a manager, they still expressed concern for the success of their specialism within the faculty such as Furniture or Fine Art. Their self-identity appeared to be undermined, in that, no matter how well they performed as managers, their position in the organisation was still vulnerable if their specialist area closed and there had been a number of course closures in recent years.

Like academics, there was evidence to indicate that managers' identity was strengthened by relationships: in this case their relationship with their own teams, for example, their ability to protect their team's interests. Their self-identity was also strengthened, or at least maintained, by blaming problems in the faculty, such as poor results, on the layer above them (the three senior faculty managers – the Dean and two Associate Deans) who were widely regarded as incompetent and controlling. For example, the senior team were blamed for taking autonomy away from managers, thus preventing them from being able to address the problems, or to feel as responsible for them.

**Table 7-2 Pre-Merger Identity (Managers)**

| Pre Merger Identity | Description | Managers – supporting quotes |
|---|---|---|
| Predominant Work Identity | Experienced and competent managers | • *"At that point I did quite a lot of kind of change management training… and that was definitely extremely useful." Manager1*<br>• *"My previous job was in education, FE and HE environment and I know what to do." Manager4*<br>• *"I was kind of conspicuously competent...I've always been better than my job." Manager5* |
| Undermined By | Exclusion from strategic decisions | • *"There were also very few meetings and decisions were never collective or debated decisions… it made me look like a kind of farcical appendage, really." Manager1*<br>• *"You take those people who can make those strategic decisions and you put them in some weird middle management place where they actually sort of don't have any control or rights." Manager5* |
| | University & Faculty reputation | • *"The [faculty] is completely off the radar, nobody talks about it." Manager5*<br>• *"I came here because I knew that their reputation was getting out of date and I wanted to help them be more controversial in their approach." Manager1*<br>• *"When I was a student in my 20s it [my particular specialism] was very prestigious and very glamorous...It was probably kind of fading even then." Manager2* |
| | Long term threat to own Arts specialism within faculty | • *"We have last man standing status in Furniture, pretty much in Jewellery because it's been too expensive for everybody else to continue." Manager2*<br>• *"I am a [specialist craft name] so I was kind of appointed on that basis." Manager1* |
| Strengthened By | Team relationship | • *"…there have definitely been points when people openly say "I wish I had a manager like you." Manager1*<br>• *"…feel a real sense of sort of loyalty to the team and sort of protection towards them…" Manager5* |
| | Blaming faculty issues on poor senior management | • *"One thing that has been fundamentally what's wrong with this faculty has been the style of management and leadership has been, well, irregular, weak." Manager4*<br>• *"They [senior team] were super controlling but incompetent, which is a perfect recipe for disaster." Manager2* |

### *7.4.2 Identity Regulation During the Change Period*

As explained in the data analysis above, the identity struggles were explored through an iterative process. A number of key identity struggles were identified and each centred on a different type of external regulatory demand experienced by academics or managers during the change.

#### *7.4.2.1 Identity Regulation of Academics*

In this section, I focus on the perspective of the 'regulator' and the nature of regulation which provoked particular identity struggles. In Table 7-3, below, I provide a summary of both the nature of the identity struggle which occurred (explored in section 7.4.3.1) and type of regulation which provoked it (explored in this section) to aid understanding of the link between the two. Initially these regulatory attempts were mainly discursive. However, as the change unfolded, identity regulation increasingly

occurred through imposed changes to every day working practices.

**Table 7-3 Link between identity struggle and identity regulation (Academics)**

| Identity Struggle | ➢ Regulation provoking struggle |
|---|---|
| **Survival to aspiration:** academics are encouraged to embrace the merger as an opportunity to develop an enhanced future self-identity as an Arts-centric Lecturer-Practitioner within a more highly regarded faculty, despite concerns that the merger is a threat to their self-identity and survival within the faculty. | ➢ **Communicating a vision of a future shared identity:** mainly discursive, shaping identity by setting out a new context, a vision of high quality, enhanced reputation and shared values. Speaking in broad terms about how academics need to act in future and who they need to become. |
| **Expert to beginner**: academic identity is undermined by the steep learning curve required to understand and adopt new practices which leads to increasing negative self-awareness (feeling like I'm not doing my job well). Academics struggle to re-establish a sense of positive self-identity esteem in the face of self-doubt about their own competence and ability to cope with the changes to teaching practices. | ➢ **Introducing new teaching practices**: mainly action oriented through new teaching practices which require new knowledge & skills. This regulates what people need to be good at in order to be seen as competent, including adapting to spatial changes such as new studio teaching spaces. |
| **Unchallenged to challenged**: academic self-identity is further undermined by the increasing ease of comparison with peers and a sense of competitive pressure to perform well. Academics struggle to maintain identity esteem due to feeling more exposed to observation and judgment. | ➢ **Increasing transparency & oversight**: regulation mainly occurs through new work practices which increase ease of comparison between academics and encourage competition. |
| **Student trust to mistrust**: academics' identity is undermined by a reduction in their hierarchical standing with students (no longer all knowing, authority figure) and decline in social relations (loss of identity esteem from having warm and cordial relationship with students). | ➢ **Pressure from students:** mainly discursive – academics experience anger & criticism from students who are struggling to understand and adapt to the new teaching practices and curriculum changes. |
| **Freedom to conformity**: academics feel that valued aspects of their existing self-identity are being set aside – such as their decision making freedom and right to maintain valued traditions. The adoption of faculty-wide, common and consistent Art-centred practices provokes an identity struggle as it involves relinquishing some activities that currently provide a sense of distinctiveness at subject level. | ➢ **Imposing consistent standards:** academics are encouraged to do things a certain way i.e. the same way it's done in Architecture and to drop some of their own longstanding activities. This happens discursively, through frequent calls for consistency, and through new practices which are mandatory and replace existing practices or leave no time for them. |
| **Lecturer-practitioner to academic lecturer:** the volume of new work means that academics feel forced to put non-teaching activities on hold that would normally help to sustain and develop their positive identity esteem, such as research or practitioner work, in order to defend their identity as competent academics. | ➢ **Increasing workload pressure:** regulation occurs through enforced new work practices which take a lot of time to implement effectively and leave much less time for non-teaching activities such as research. |

*Communicating a vision of a future shared identity*

Early in the change process the Dean began by conducting a 3 month review where he met with staff and consulted widely. This was accompanied by physical practices, such as people walking into classrooms with clipboards, which underscored the

sense of takeover and imminent change. Following this review, the Dean communicated his vision for the new faculty. He attempted to gain buy-in to his vision through discursive forms of identity regulation, presenting the changes in terms which appealed directly to lecturers' self-identity as expert lecturer-practitioners. The Dean flatteringly suggested that the two faculties already had much in common, such as a focus on making things carefully and well, and that there would be benefits for working more closely together. He spoke of significant investment in refurbishing the building and of developing a common curriculum based on the successful Architecture model that was more sympathetic to Arts and in line with other top schools.

*"Everywhere I go in [Art & Design] there is...commitment to ... socially engaged forms of practice... things that are done carefully and well... Out of this conversation fascinating possibilities have emerged ...future disciplinary alliances ... a common interest in practice-based research...We are also developing ambitious plans for reworking our buildings." Dean*

*"A shared identity based upon common values and ambitions..." Dean*

The Dean presented the merger as a promising opportunity. He regulated academics' identity by setting out a new strategic outlook and emphasising a particular set of shared values. Academics were free to decide whether to treat the Dean's vision with cynicism, particularly given their recent experiences of poor management, but were encouraged to respond more positively and, in doing so, begin to align the Dean's vision with their individual identity aspirations. After the initial communication, the Dean continued to promote positive stories about the faculty on an ongoing basis, such as exhibitions and progress on building refurbishment, through regular newsletters, trade-press interviews and the intranet.

*Introducing New Teaching Practices*

The new academic year saw the introduction of a common curriculum with themed, year-long, practice-based studios where students spent about half of all their teaching time in activities related to designing and making, as well as a year-long common history and theory (H&T) module leading to a dissertation in the final year (a quarter of students' timetables). Historically, academics had experience with a wide range of separate modules on particular topics. Under the new model, studios were

based around a theme such as ‘anarchy’ or ‘temporary dwellings’ rather than a topic such as ‘textile design’ or skill such as ‘batik’ or ‘block printing’. Many studios were a mix of students from different year groups and different courses, so the nature of the student audience was more diverse and complex. Spatially, there were significant differences as, instead of lots of disparate modules in different rooms, lecturers and students spent most of their time in one studio room and were encouraged to create the sense of a home room.

*“And then when it [studio] was ready all it was, was a shell…this weird studio, physical studio, this big space which is noisy and cold.” Academic3*

The changes involved significant alteration to the knowledge and skills required by academics and, in doing so, appeared to regulate what it now meant to be an effective and competent academic. For example, both the H&T course and the studio came with their own calendar of activities and assessment points which were common across the faculty. Academics had little choice but to comply with the calendar and run residential study trips for the first time, provide more frequent feedback, take part in the studio voting system and celebration weeks (sharing and critiquing the work of each studio), organise additional activities and lecture series and adopt a much more academic approach to the dissertation.

*“There were all the changes within the new studios, the new modules, there was so much change.” Academic5*

*Increasing Transparency & Oversight*

New academic practices brought a new level of transparency that the Dean explained was key to the success of Architecture. He argued that transparency increased quality because it enabled academics to observe good practice and encouraged them to respond to any shortfall in their own performance relative to their peers.

*“The [studio] system we set up is not benign. It’s designed to generate an increase in quality.” Dean*

For example, studio voting, involved open competition between academics. Each studio leader made a 15 minute presentation about their studio to the whole Art & Design faculty and then students voted for the studio that they wanted to join. The Dean explained that in Architecture people with low votes would reflect on this, compare their studio with the other pitches, and improve the studio design for the

following year.

*"If you are standing up in front of your entire cohort punting the studio three years running and nobody wants to join it..[this] is actually a much more transparent system where teachers are rated and the strong ones know that they're doing well and the poor ones know that they've got to do something about it." Dean*

Practices such as studio voting, celebration week and residential trips appeared to act as a new form of identity regulation in that they provided many more opportunities for peers and line managers to see lecturers at work and for individuals to question and judge their own performance, relative to their peers.

*"The penny has dropped in one or two areas so if you aren't popular and students don't want to be taught by you, it's problematic and unfortunately that's the nature of the studio system, that's why it's successful. So there's quite a lot of insecurity about that, which is built into the DNA of the structure of this thing." Dean*

*Pressurising from Students*

New practices, such as the studio system and the common H&T module, significantly changed the student experience. For example, different year groups being taught together, new marking moderation, changes to the summer exhibition and new studio classroom spaces were all sources of change that resulted in confusion, anxiety and sometimes anger from students. Under the new model, students were more focused on the quality of their studio and H&T lecturers as they spent more time with them and the marks counted for a larger proportion of their end grade. Lecturers were also more dependent on students who now had a choice over which studio to vote for. It was evident from the way that academics described their relationship with students that they were used to feeling valued and trusted by students who looked to them as authority figures and reliable sources of knowledge and expertise. Under the new system, students began to talk much more openly to each other about the different studios and challenged lecturers as to why something that happened in one studio, such as a museum trip, was not happening in another.

*"There was an awful lot of talk amongst the students about what was a good studio, what was a bad studio, what was good teaching, what was bad." Academic1*

Academics' position as trusted guides appeared to be an important source of identity esteem and they spoke of feeling pressure to address student issues; which arguably would help to re-establish their social standing. For example, there were student

complaints about the new system, such as, students who did not like working with other students from lower year groups, who they felt were not up to the same standard.

*"The [first year] students didn't want to work with or be with the [foundation year] students because they thought they were at a lower level." Academic1*

*Imposing Consistent Standards*

According to the Dean, the new teaching practices, such as the common History & Theory module and marking moderation, were designed to bring consistency in standards of quality across the faculty. There was a lot of involvement at FMG level around agreeing the studio themes, and managing the content and format of the summer exhibition to achieve a carefully 'curated' and consistent look and feel to the exhibition at the faculty level. The push for consistency came not only from Architecture practices but also from academic managers in Art and Design. For example, the new marking moderation process took place at cross-faculty level and was led by a panel of academic managers who checked the marks across a wide range of courses.

*"In the past, I never questioned the teams assessment moderation processes... it was completely sound... it feels like we don't trust their academic decisions which I think has been quite corrosive." FMG Member*

This was in contrast to before the merger where each specialist area had largely kept to itself for areas such as marking or the summer show. This appeared to be a significant form of regulation in that it provided a new set of rules and procedures which challenged and replaced existing norms and practices. It also reduced some existing decision making freedoms, for example, where marking was moderated at cross-faculty rather than course level, and imposed practices from one discipline, Architecture, on to others, such as Art and Design which appeared to undermine academics' sense of entitlement to artistic difference and distinctiveness.

*"...loss of autonomy in terms of how [courses] run, what they deliver, who delivers it... being told what and how we are doing essentially across the board." Academic1*

*Increasing Workload Pressure*

During the change period, the volume of work generated by new practices seemed to act as a form of regulation in that there were so many new procedures and practices

that were mandatory, that it left little time for any practitioner or research work. For example, the assessment workload generated by the History and Theory module, the studio year-long calendar of activities and events, and the time needed for preparing new lecture material. Academics expressed concern about the time they were able to commit to other roles, such as research and practice and professional development. Thus workload appeared to regulate these different aspects of their academic identity.

*"my business is suffering for it which is quite hard…I've got no big projects on at the moment because I can't take on that kind of commitment with this kind of commitment in the way, you know, it's just not possible." Academic4*

#### *7.4.2.2 Identity Regulation of Managers*

Managers experienced different types of identity regulation. In Table 7-4 below I provide a summary of both the nature of the struggle that was triggered (explored in section 7.4.3.2) and the type of regulation that triggered it (explored in this section). As with academics, regulation appeared to be mainly discursive initially. However, as the change unfolded, evidence indicated that identity regulation increasingly occurred through changes to every day working practices and also through spatial changes.

**Table 7-4 Link between identity struggle and identity regulation (Managers)**

| Identity Struggle | Regulation provoking struggle |
|---|---|
| **Threatened to Challenged:** managers are encouraged to see the merger, not as a threat to their existing identity, but as an opportunity to develop an enhanced future self-identity as Arts Managers and more strategic leaders and to play a key role in transforming the faculty into a more highly regarded institution. | ➢ **Communicating a vision of a future shared identity:** similar to academics. Mainly discursive, shaping identity by setting out new context, vision of high quality, enhanced reputation, shared values; also speaking in broad terms about how managers need to act in future and who they need to become. |
| **Confident and competent to tested and uncertain:** managers' identity esteem is undermined by the sense of being tested by the Dean. They question their own performance and look to others as potential competitors for jobs. Managers are uncertain how to behave in order to be seen to be doing their job well and try to understand the new rules of the game. | ➢ **Testing for strategic leadership capability:** Regulation occurs through the defining of leadership qualities, criteria for recruitment and skills required; also through creating opportunities for managers to 'step up' and demonstrate their leadership potential. |
| **Team leader to dual FMG identity:** managers' identity is undermined by the sense of being observed and judged by their peers in a new shared location and of being uncertain of how to behave. At the same time the move undermines their relationship with their teams (seen as more remote and less of a team champion) and increases the level of criticism from people who | ➢ **Co-locating new FMG team to encourage dual identity:** the Dean wanted FMG to develop their identity as an FMG member and not just as a leader of a particular team; to encourage this he mandated the move of FMG to a shared office. The new space shapes interaction between FMG and creates physical distance from subordinates. |

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| used to be a source of identity esteem. | |
| **Prospective strategic leader to fire-fighter:** Managers feel pressure to act more strategically but find they are often unable to do so due to the volume of change and limited resources. This undermines their sense of identity as effective managers (they experience frustration at knowing what they should be doing but feel unable to do it and question if it's their fault). | ➢ **Encouraging leadership:** The Dean continues to encourage the development of leadership skills and to set out what it means to be a leader. This occurs through talk (guidance) and new work practices which require new skills such as chairing lower level meetings. |
| **Unaccountable to held to account:** Managers' identity esteem as effective managers is undermined when they are unable to meet deadlines; they are unused to such close and persistent tracking. Monitoring also raises their self-awareness of failing to meet a target. | ➢ **Holding people to account:** regulation occurs through close monitoring of progress through meetings and not accepting deadline slips. |
| **Desirable shared identity to undesirable imposed identity:** Managers' identity is undermined by the Dean's insistence on fully implementing new practices which feels like a restriction on their decision making freedom. The sense that all Architecture practices are better belittles Art practices (and by association the managers responsible for them). | ➢ **Fully implementing new practices:** regulation occurs through the Dean's continued insistence that new work practices are implemented fully and mirror, as closely as possible, the existing practices in Architecture. |

*Communicating a vision of a future shared identity*

After a 3 month period of review at the start of the merger, the Dean presented his vision. The Dean continued to build on this through actively generating and communicating good news stories throughout the change process. As a form of discursive regulation, this appeared to impact both academics and managers in similar ways. However, talking to managers, it was evident that this also set the tone of the Dean's management style and his expectations of managers. In contrast to the previous senior team, he was visible and consultative. He talked about his aspirations for his management team, whom he wanted step up as more visible leaders and to think strategically.

*"Within the creative industries or creative academic areas schools are the unit of currency...And they need strong leadership, they need strong identity [or] it doesn't work...So, I'm wanting those people to be totally strident about the leadership of their area." Dean*

*Testing for Strategic Leadership Capability*

According to FMG, the period leading up to the management restructure (about 5 months from September 2011 to March 2012) became an implicit period of 'testing' as managers tried to demonstrate their fit with the Dean's more strategic leadership

approach.

*"In the past we didn't do vision, we did tasks. There wasn't anyone asking, what is the School...? What's it do? What's its mission?" Manager2*

The Dean allocated tasks such as marketing activities or preparation for the summer exhibition and people stated that they saw this as an opportunity to prove themselves.

*"For me it was about buying time to demonstrate to [the Dean]…to be able to demonstrate value to him… So I did that review." Manager3*

*"The whole summer show was clearly becoming a serious test." Manager1*

The job application process itself had attributes associated with identity regulation as the job descriptions outlined the sort of person the Dean was looking for and the knowledge and skills required. Managers were asked to present their vision for their area as part of the interview process and expressed awareness that their vision would need to be appealing to the Dean.

*"Within those interviews, they have to present their vision." Dean*

The pressure to meet the job requirements was exacerbated by the fact that all the jobs in the new management team were open and the process was competitive.

*"The JD's [job descriptions] have all gone out... everybody displaces, apart from one post...and everybody else can apply for any post." Dean*

*"I'm very open, I honestly do think we'll be sitting with two other deans and I will be looking quite hard at what people say and do and how they present themselves... In most areas there's at least I think two people who I think will be interested in it." Dean*

*Co-locating new FMG team to encourage dual identity*

Following the management restructure in March 2012, a significant form of regulation involved moving FMG members into a shared office and mandating that they work there on particular days.

*"Basically, I mean, I think of it spatially as well. There will be a sort of area of management of the whole faculty ... all of us together, in a sort of environment. So, they are not going to disappear off. They don't know this yet." Dean*

Managers noted that this spatial change facilitated an increase in the level of interaction between FMG as a team but also impacted the hierarchical relationship

between FMG and their existing team leadership role. Managers were no longer co-located alongside their subordinates but were remote and much more inaccessible, in a separate building requiring its own building pass. The Dean referred to an increased sense of hierarchical distance between managers and their team.

*"The sort of traumas within [Art & Design] over the last four or five years, [managers have] been part of a sort of the French resistance you know...with [their] troops, bombing the train." Dean*

*Encouraging Leadership*

After the restructure, the Dean continued to encourage managers to develop as leaders. He encouraged managers to lead their own areas with vision and ambition; which seemed to be a form of discursive identity regulation to shape what it meant to be an effective manager.

*"It was about trying to put ambition back into everybody's thinking about this stage...and I'm sitting on them very hard now saying 'no, no tell me what you really want to achieve now'. So there's a lot of pressure on that...that's going to be one of the biggest challenges." Dean*

The Dean initiated HR & Finance training for FMG members which he said was to develop their management skills. FMG were put in charge of implementing new practices within their teams such as changes to curriculum including the new studios and history and theory modules. The Dean also used practices such as delegating the task of giving speeches at events and handing out awards to School Heads, and encouraged managers to act more clearly as figureheads for their teams. He also introduced a lower level meeting structure where each FMG member had a responsibility as Chair. The Dean encouraged managers to step up quickly into a more visible leadership role.

*"There's a very short window of opportunity now for, say, somebody like [FMG member] to move from where she has been and establish her credibility and enthusiasm with her staff...she's got to jump in really hard and do it in a really ambitious way...they've got to transform themselves in the perception of everybody they're working with." Dean*

*Holding People to Account*

As part of the restructure the Dean promoted some managers to Associate Dean level (the Heads of School for example) and others remained at Academic Leader level (Marketing Head) but the two Associate Dean posts were removed and there was no longer an organisational layer between the academic managers and the Dean. Fortnightly meetings provided a formal arena in which the Dean encouraged managers to stick to deadlines and held them to account in front of their peers.

*"Basically, we will be talking directly and I'll be chivvying them, bullying them and supporting them." Dean*

Meetings provided an opportunity for discursive regulation, such as praising people who delivered on time, but also a noticeable unwillingness to let people off the hook.

"*This is a period in which they have got to swim. I'm going to wait to the water has got to their noses before I'll grab them and that's the only way to do it." Dean*

People who attempted to renegotiate deadlines outside the formal meetings found that it was difficult to do so, in part because the Dean was not easily accessible. The Dean made it clear to FMG that he did not like to take no for an answer, even if a deadline seemed impossible.

*"The Dean doesn't want to hear 'no' he wants to hear what he has to do to help do it at that time." Manager1*

*Fully Implementing New Practices*

The early rhetoric within the Dean's vision focussed on the similarities between the two faculties and the attractiveness of a new shared identity. The Dean argued that new practices, such as the studio system and the common history and theory module were sympathetic to the Arts generally, not just to Architecture. However, once the new academic year started, people expressed surprise at just how significant the changes were for Art and Design and how closely the Dean wanted managers to introduce Architecture practices, without alteration.

*"Structures, such as the studio systems, such as crits...are designed in their purest form to bring about the change, to sort of compromise on that such that actually ultimately it makes it harder because it's slower and it's less effective." Dean*

This is similar to regulation of academics through 'imposing consistent standards'. Strict new rules of operating challenged managers' sense of autonomy. There seemed to be little appreciation for differences between Architecture and Art & Design, such as the type of students and the challenge of managing them.

Architecture practices were seen as the one right way.

*"I think there is a general belief that everything that happens in the School of Architecture is better than anything that happens outside of the School of Architecture and that is insidious across most things." Manager1*

### *7.4.3 Identity Struggles and Identity Work*

In the previous section I focussed on the different forms of identity regulation which occurred during the merger process. In this section I focus on the identity struggles which appeared to be triggered by this regulation and the nature of identity work.

#### *7.4.3.1 Academics - Identity Struggles and Identity Work*

The earlier table (Table 7-3) provides a summary of identity struggles that academics experienced and the identity regulation which provoked them. This section focuses on how academics responded to regulation through their identity work. Table 7-5 provides supporting quotes.

*Identity Struggle as Opportunity (Academics) - From Survival to Aspiration*

Initially, the announcement of the merger appeared to undermine academics' self-identity, particularly the threat of course closures. Most academics had already survived a number of redundancy rounds and spoke of seeing each cycle as a test of the value of their course to the university and, linked to that, their continued value as a lecturer-practitioner within the university.

*"I think all mergers are concerning, quite worrying because they get a shake up. You never know how that shake up's going to go...because every year I've been here, there have been cuts." Academic4*

As the Dean undertook his 3 month review and communicated his vision, academics had the opportunity to respond through their identity work, through shared and individual sensemaking. For example, comments about the brand indicate that people were reflecting on the Dean's words and beginning to imagine a strengthened future self-identity as part of a thriving Art & Design and Architecture faculty.

*"I think, maybe with this [faculty] re-launcher a more powerful brand and better accommodation maybe we'll go up the rankings and maybe, I think we probably will attract better students." Academic3*

This struggle is different to the ones that follow as it appeared to challenge academics' existing self-identity, not by threatening or undermining it, but by

promoting an opportunity for an enhanced identity. In becoming part of a more prestigious faculty academics would increase their professional and social standing as lecturer-practitioners. The Dean encouraged people to see the merger as an opportunity, and in doing so to whole-heartedly embrace the changes that would be needed, rather than passively comply or even actively oppose them. Whilst academics expressed some early enthusiasm for the changes, it was evident that they were not yet fully aware of the extent of change it would actually involve.

*"His first couple of presentations were really heartening, in fact I felt really good about those, even though I could see he was going to work us hard." Academic3*

Over time, academics appeared to struggle between the desire and motivation to move towards the enhanced future identity, and the new practices that were needed to deliver the Dean's vision which often challenged and undermined their existing self-identity.

*Identity Struggle (Academics) – From Expert to Beginner*

Following the Dean's early communication, there was no evidence that the merger had a significant impact on academics' day to day experiences until the start of the new academic year. Then, in September 2012, academics adopted the new curriculum. The main form of identity regulation was through changes to everyday teaching practices which changed the type of knowledge and skill required to be a competent lecturer-practitioner. This appeared to undermine academics sense of positive value as effective and experienced educators as they spoke of feeling very much out of their depth.

*"I like to know where I'm at and what I'm doing…to feel competent and to feel in control and I'm not feeling like that." Academic4*

Many of their existing lecturing materials and classroom activities were no longer relevant and had to be built up again, often from scratch. The layout of the physical space and the equipment in refurbished rooms was different so they also had to adapt their mode of delivery. Part of academics' sense of competence seemed to come from knowing 'what I'm doing' and carefully planning out their course in advance and delivering it. However, the detail of many of the new practices, such as celebration weeks and residential study trips, only emerged during the year and academics spoke of their plans being constantly revised. Their identity work appeared to take a discursive form, for example, struggling to cope but blaming this

on the fact ‘there was so much change’ or there were ‘a lot of variables’ or it was inherently ‘tricky to manage’. However, their identity work was also appeared to be anchored in new work practices as they attempted to repair and renew their sense of competence through developing new academic materials, re-planning activities and adapting their lecturing style to incorporate mixed groups.

*“There wasn’t a lot of time to worry about the niceties… In week one, kind of, [my colleague] turned to me and said, “That’s one week, twenty-nine to go... And it was that idea that we’ve just got to get through this.” Academic2*

This identity work through ‘doing’ may also have come to the fore because, under intense pressure, there was little time for deeper discussion and reflection.

*“There was no time for discussion, there was no time for me to sort of say, ‘I’m looking at this way of presenting this, what do you think’.” Academic1*

*Identity Struggle (Academics) – From Unchallenged to Challenged*

New work practices, such as studio voting, increased oversight and competition and reduced academics’ ability to protect their self-identity from criticism.

*“It started getting competitive and seriously competitive.” Academic1*

Academics spoke about how their own performance compared against their colleagues.

*“I thought it was good but for my discipline it was really hard. But I think for other disciplines it was smoother. For [other discipline] for example, you know, they gelled with the Architects.” Academic3*

However, there was evidence to indicate that the most effective way to restore their identity esteem was to develop a good studio pitch or residential trip and to learn from the practice of others.

*“I thought well, we could do a bit more of what [other discipline] have done so I’ve been trying to copy what they’re doing on their website because I think they do it much better than us.” Academic4*

Whilst poor performance was more transparent, so was good performance, and those who did well received notice and praise.

*“That’s why events like the cross crits, the exhibitions and so on are so critical because...[academics] are getting actually for the first time a fundamental vote of confidence which is about them and their teaching which is not disguised by processes or intermediaries.” Dean*

*Identity Struggle (Academics) – From Freedom to Conformity*

As part of the change, there was increased pressure to impose consistent standards across the faculty, for example, through common academic practices, activities and events. Academics expressed their anger at the volume of imposed changes to their existing working practices and reduction in decision making autonomy. They also shared their annoyance that the default position seemed to be 'Architecture knows best' and spoke of the merger feeling more like a takeover, with one specialism's practices and values imposed on another.

*"...think it felt a little bit like the Architecture thing has been a bit of a takeover." Academic2*

However, people tended to express their frustration privately. For example, arguing that the changes undermined their right to professional freedom.

*"The problem was you had non-professionals to the discipline making a judgment on somebody's process and practice." Academic1*

Unlike the struggle connected with loss of expertise or increased oversight, there was less sense of people undertaking identity-work, to restore their self-identity, which was in alignment with the Dean's vision, and more sense of a loss of goodwill through people feeling bitter and aggrieved.

*Identity Struggle (Academics) – From Student Trust to Student Mistrust*

Academics reported that new practices, such as the studio system, created anxiety for students. For academics, this appeared to trigger an identity struggle between their identity as trusted and valued professionals and authority figures, and the reality of finding themselves confronted by anxious, confused and occasionally very angry students.

*"We're going to have some bad feedback from some of the students … but it all comes back to me doesn't it in the end, one way or another." Academic4*

Over time, academics seemed to repair their self-identity as competent, popular lecturers through rebuilding student trust. For example, this took a discursive form, through explaining and justifying the changes, and through supporting students through the new work practices so they could experience and understand the benefits for themselves.

*"I had to go in and go in to a very emotive, shouty hour and a half session with the*

*students and just calm them..." Academic1*

*Identity Struggle (Academics) – From Lecturer-Practitioner to Academic Lecturer*

Academics' self-identity as both practitioners and lecturers appeared to be impacted by the workload volume which, academics argued, made it almost impossible to find time for other aspects of their identity related to practitioner or research work.

*"I ended up teaching 5 days a week. Practically the whole year... I had literally no time to do any of that [professional development work]. So, yes, we struggled and we struggled to the point where we just couldn't do any more." Academic1*

Academics responded discursively by developing self-narratives that justified why they were unable to do other work. Interestingly, there was a temporal element as academics spoke of consciously putting their practitioner or researcher identity on hold for a period of time, to focus on protecting their identity as competent lecturers.

*"I kind of semi-consciously thought last year...'There's no way I'm going to have time to do any [research]' and if I try, I'm just going to get frustrated." Academic2*

**Table 7-5 Identity Struggles (Academics)**

| **Academics - Identity Struggles and Identity Work** | |
|---|---|
| **Identity Struggle** | **Supporting Quotes** |
| Struggle as opportunity: Survival to Aspiration | *Threat*<br>• *"There have been so many changes, so many restructurings and re-organisations that it's all about surviving them, really." Academic2*<br>• *"I think there was a slight feeling, a slight anxiety perhaps, that we might be taken over. And that was further compounded …by people sort of just walking into studios…with kind of clipboards and plans." Academic5*<br>*Buy-in to Opportunity*<br>• *"But I think we knew that Architecture was quite a sound ship and had a good reputation and that probably would help us in the end if we could maintain what we've got; it might professionalise it and strengthen it and give it a kind of edge it was lacking, perhaps." Academic2*<br>• *"So I'm very pleased that [the Dean] kind of supports you know, that he's keen on making, and that he has that as a priority." Academic5* |
| Struggle: Expert to beginner | • *"It was really hand to mouth [at] first...." Academic3*<br>• *"I think we're all muddling through a little bit." Academic2*<br>• *"I had never taught that before. I really didn't know." Academic1*<br>• *"We'd planned a whole set of things and then we had to unplan a whole set of things… a particular week where we were told we had to…go on a study trip. It was in week 8 but we weren't sure, we sort of vaguely knew what we were doing…there were a lot of variables going on." Academic1*<br>• *"It's harder for us because the studios for the MA include BA final years... half of them are BA, half are MA so that's tricky". Academic3* |
| Struggle: Unchallenged to challenged | • *"The competitiveness I found was to the point, it got a little out of hand personally I thought... It was difficult..." Academic3*<br>• *"And then you've got tutors, even my course leader was accusing me of over tutoring the students for presentations." Academic1*<br>• *"I also coached my students in making sure that it fitted in [with professional* |

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| | *practice module]. I spent a lot of time making sure it fitted in but again, I was criticised for doing that even though we were supposed to do that because we had to also teach on it." Academic1* |
| Struggle: Freedom to conformity | • *"The structures and the management of this, of the institutional element of the institution, in this case the faculty has kind of been … imposed is perhaps a bit strong but introduced at least." Academic2*<br>• *"Our studios were vetted right the way down...some people's professional practice they thought were put into jeopardy." Academic1*<br>• *"You've got [the Design Head], obviously who we know is a Jeweller...then looking at something that is spatial and not getting it... just because you don't understand what you are looking at does not mean that this is not a first class piece of work and what you have to understand is that we can see it, we can see it in the depth and breadth of it here." Academic1* |
| Struggle: Student trust to mistrust | • *"It was damage limitation where students were being militant..saying "you're not providing this." Academic1*<br>• *"The second years going into the third year they found it a culture shock. They really did." Academic4*<br>• *"Studios coming in plus new modules…I'm only just catching up now really. I was giving the students verbal briefs that I hadn't written." Academic3*<br>• *"Once [students] started comparing their learning then we started getting real trouble…they were saying 'well they're doing that in that studio…I want to do more of that'…and then it got really difficult." Academic1* |
| Struggle: Lecturer-practitioner to academic lecturer | • *"So that was something that we would have started [photography exhibition work]…because of all the moves we can't do anything." Academic5*<br>• *"I have no time to do practice work. I have been approached a number of occasions…and I haven't been able to do it." Academic1*<br>• *"I didn't do my personal development in terms of my CPD…so there was a whole side that I feel very bereft and very lost." Academic1* |

### *7.4.3.2 Managers - Identity Struggles and Identity Work*

Managers also experienced identity struggles during the merger period which are explored here (Table 7-6 provides supporting quotes). The earlier table (Table 7-4) provides a summary of the identity regulation behind each identity struggle.

*Identity Struggle as Opportunity (Managers) – From Threatened to Challenged*

The merger initially appeared to be seen as an identity threat to academic managers who, like academics, feared closure or job loss. However, managers expressed relief as soon as the Dean started to meet with people as part of his 3 month consultation. The Dean communicated a vision of a future shared identity as part of a more prestigious faculty which appeared to be a good fit with managers' identity aspirations. The Dean's vision for his management team, as more visible strategic leaders, was also spoken about favourably and seemed to fit with manager's desire for a more aspirational senior manager self-identity.

*"It was cultural. It was the confidence to say we can be better than we currently are and we're good currently." Manager1*

Managers' identity work appeared to involve sensemaking and developing a desired

future identity as part of a combined Art and Architecture faculty albeit, like academics, there was little evidence that they knew exactly what this would involve.

This can be seen as a form of struggle as opportunity rather than threat. The Dean's regulation appeared to trigger issues of self-identity but did so in a way which generated positive energy, self-hope rather than self-doubt, and a desire to move away from an existing identity and towards a more attractive, enhanced identity. However, a significant challenge remained as the Dean planned to restructure and reduce the size of the senior team.

*Identity Struggle (Managers) - From Confident & Competent to Tested & Uncertain*

Managers spoke about the period before the management restructure by the Dean in March 2012 as a sustained period of uncertainty and anxiety.

> *"It's the worst I've ever been through any application process... it really threatened my sense of identity in a way I didn't expect." Manager1*

Managers said that the Dean was testing their leadership capability and that their success in gaining a position in the restructure depended on their ability to demonstrate their leadership potential.

> *"He's just been watching and he's been testing...us to see if we can generate...ideas like the vision, the mission for the school." Manager2*

Their identity work seemed to involve trying to understand what it meant to be a manager in the new faculty and to demonstrate those qualities. For example, managers responded through discursive practices which demonstrated their potential as strategic leaders, such as presenting an inspiring vision for their area. They also responded through their work practices such as clearing actions points, meeting deadlines and putting on an impressive summer show, all of which helped the change process.

> *"Half of the gallery [at the summer show] I thought looked really good...those visual evidence of the Dean's faculty, he loved them. So regardless of whether anybody went to those rooms or not, they won us his visualisation of his dream." Manager*

*Identity Struggle (Managers) – From Team Leader to Dual Team and FMG Identity*

Once the new single faculty management group (FMG) was appointed, in March 2012, the Dean immediately put in place practices that he said would provide

'mechanisms for collaboration' to encourage FMG to communicate and work with each other. It was evident that the Dean wanted the team to develop a dual-identity as both an FMG member and a team leader of their own area. In particular, this included co-locating the new team. Co-location appeared to undermine managers' identity because they spoke of feeling like newcomers again – like it was the first day on a new job and they struggled to know how to behave.

*"We were suddenly meant to be a team you know... trying to be desperately polite with each other ... just like Big Brother...we're watching what time someone comes in... all of the farce of working in a new job, working out what you wear." Manager1*

The new location, and the role of managers as key implementers of new practices, also impacted managers' relationships with their existing team. For example, a team member spoke of feeling a shift from her line manager as a source of collegiality to a source of pressure.

*"She [in the past] felt more of a collegiate attitude towards us...but now the shift is that FMG is definitely more of a management group...And so therefore the pressure on us to perform is coming from her." Course Leader about Manager*

Managers' self-identity as the loyal champion of their team appeared to be undermined and they had yet to develop a strong identity as part of a single FMG team.

*"At that point when the Dean moved us into here [shared office], I said 'it's an ivory tower, everyone's going to see it as an ivory tower'...And they noticed immediately that I wasn't available to them at the drop of a hat." Manager1*

Managers appeared to respond to regulation from the Dean and their own teams discursively, for example, through complaining to themselves or trusted peers, but also in ways that helped to progress the change in line with the Dean's vision, such as getting to know the other FMG members and trying to maintain a dialogue with their team. They also adapted their work practices, such as arriving in the shared office early, holding regular meetings with their teams and 'split-living' (moving between different offices with all their work in a bag) as they attempted to navigate between their FMG and team responsibilities.

*Identity Struggle (Managers) – From Strategic Leadership to Fire-fighting*

Managers had expressed a desire for a more strategic role in the faculty and seemed

to welcome the Dean's focus on strategic leadership, which might be seen as representing a desirable enhanced future identity. Managers had the opportunity to demonstrate some of these leadership qualities during the period before the restructure. However, once the new academic year began in September 2012, the volume of change made it almost impossible for managers to devote time to strategic thinking which appeared to challenge their burgeoning sense of identity as more strategic leaders.

*"There are always little things that you needed to do and then again that takes away from the strategic things that you should be doing."* Manager3

Evidence indicated that managers' identity was undermined by the amount of time they found they were spending on unrewarding administration work. For example, they argued that the Dean had promised them more autonomy but they were mostly implementing top down change.

*"I took this job because it was the bigger picture job, the leadership, the vision, the moving things beyond fire fighting, the ambitious 'we are going somewhere' job… On the floor, it's quite different. It's a lot of compliance that's going on."* Manager5

Managers responded, mainly discursively, for example, by blaming other people for the volume of work or lack of resources or more actively by raising concerns at FMG meetings. Some managers spoke of blaming themselves for their inability to manage the workload.

*"It starts to erode your confidence in yourself because you start thinking, is it too much or is it that I'm not coping very well or is it that I'm too slow at doing these things?...So I feel like my competence level is sort of reduced... I mean, the problem with that is that it's hard not to feel self-critical." Manager5*

These issues appeared to continue to undermine their sense of identity as competent managers and strategic leaders. It was only towards the end of the change period, as the pressure of work reduced slightly, that managers talked about beginning to find workable solutions that increased their ability to think and act strategically.

*Identity Struggle (Managers) – From Blaming Others to Being Held to Account*

Meetings provided the Dean with an opportunity to set targets and review progress. Managers' self-identity appeared to be undermined when the Dean held them to account during the meetings and they were unable to meet deadlines and unable to move them. Privately they spoke of blaming the Dean for having unrealistic

expectations.

*"I feel both empathy, and sympathy for [peer], dealing with the Dean and his ridiculous expectations." Manager1*

However, evidence also indicated that they tried to repair their identity, for example, through every day practices which helped them to meet the Dean's high expectations, such as, trying to delegate more. This proved difficult because people outside FMG were already very busy or were difficult to delegate to and managers stated that the easiest option was often to do the work themselves, despite a heavy existing workload. This frequently led to managers working very long hours.

*"I'm working till 12 o'clock at night, I work at weekends, you know, I don't have a life at the moment really." Manager5*

Managers appeared to trade-off other aspects of their self-identity over the short term, such as being a good carer, researcher, practitioner, in order to retain their predominant work identity as effective managers.

*"I have to admit that...I've neglected my studio practice…I have neglected my partner; I've sort of neglected everything." Manager5*

*Identity Struggle – From Desirable Shared Identity to Undesirable Imposed identity*

The Dean's insistence that new practices, such as the studio system, which were already used in Architecture, were implemented as fully as possible began to be spoken about as the imposition of one specialist identity on to another, much as it did for academics. Managers were tasked with fully implementing the new practices within teams and responded, in part, by claiming their right to be different. For example, they argued that practices that were appropriate for Architecture students (typically from affluent socio-economic backgrounds with top entry grades) were not necessarily suitable for Art & Design students who were generally from lower socio-economic groups (and with lower entry grades or other alternative entry qualifications) and who needed more time and more support to develop their work.

*"We have very different student demographics and we should be celebrating that, not turning our students into one size fits all because we won't do it...We won't get kind of three As at A-Level for Art and Design, we just will not." Manager1*

Managers also expressed their opinion that the Dean favoured Architecture over Art & Design and, for example, only favoured Art & Design if it would benefit Architecture students.

*"[I'm] convinced the Dean wants to protect Furniture because its potential is so valuable for Architecture. All architects eventually design some furniture." Manager2*

This belief also made it less likely that the change would be implemented exactly as intended by the Dean as it provided a rationale for failing to adopt Architecture practices fully: practices which the Dean had argued were key to raising quality. It also positioned managers as victims of an unwelcome change rather than viewing the merger as an opportunity for enhancing their self-identity.

**Table 7-6 Identity Struggles (Managers)**

| **Managers - Identity Struggles and Identity Work** | |
|---|---|
| **Identity Struggle** | **Supporting Quotes** |
| Struggle as opportunity: Threatened to Challenged | *Threat*<br>• *"But people were still nervous to rally entirely because of not knowing what was going to happen next and feeling anxious... So, there was an underlying threat in that because people thought you know 'we've been told we are so bad, the university believes we're bad'... this guy is going to come in, review and close us down". Manager1*<br>*Buy-in to Opportunity / Challenge*<br>• *"I thought actually, there'll be more autonomy and this was one of the things that was very much sold to me was the autonomy." Manager5*<br>• *"So, when the Dean of Architecture was appointed...people suddenly then you know rallied behind him because he came, he met people, which the previous Dean didn't, he shut himself away...He was entirely presenting what people wanted to hear at that time which was consultation was of critical importance, the duty of care and those kinds of ideas." Manager1* |
| Struggle: Confident and competent to tested and uncertain | • *"He asked us, 'what's your vision?'… [He's] an extremely clever man and…he's just been watching and he's been testing; testing us in two ways. Testing us to see if we can generate things, not just do what he said. But, to generate the ideas like the vision, the mission for the school or whatever it might be; commercial ideas. He's also been testing us in workload." [shortened version of this quote in main body] Manager2*<br>• *"He says things like, we have to step up." Manager2*<br>• *"Somebody gave me a significant pep talk to finally make my mind up to apply for the job because I was uncertain." Manager4*<br>• *"And we've got the extra thing of competing with each other [for jobs in the new structure]. And not knowing each other well enough to know whether that's a real threat or an imagined threat." Manager1*<br>• *"The interview this time was different. In previous interviews I was so frustrated at the pointlessness of it. I knew they were going to appoint me, because I knew what the competition was." Manager2* |
| Struggle: Team leader to dual FMG identity | • *"You know, all of that kind of bizarre aspect of it which I'm sure is what the Dean wanted. He wanted it to feel like it was a new job, not the old job and we were his people doing his thing." Manager1*<br>• *"So, we're all going to be together ... sailing a new [faculty] down there... It's not the old, it's not the two faculties merged, it's not business as usual." Manager4*<br>• *"We'd been thrown into a competitive situation with each other and then we were suddenly meant to be a team you know...as a new team trying to be desperately polite with each other ... just like Big Brother...we're watching what time someone comes in, in the morning, what time someone leaves in the day, you know all of the farce of working in a new job, working out what you wear." Manager1 [shortened version of this quote in main body]* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • *From Course Leader: "She [in the past] felt more of a collegiate attitude towards us as school members, because we were the support of her when she would go into battle with FMG, but now the shift is that FMG is definitely more of a management group ... And so therefore the pressure on us to perform is coming from her." [shortened version of this in main body]*<br>• *"You can talk to [FMG] people if you need them, but I still feel that, I see less people...there was a larger group of people I talked to more often." Manager4*<br>• *"It's important for [my team] to understand that I've got this other role now but they can't feel left ...So I said, 'I'm going to do split living, I'll divide my time between the old office and the new'...walking between these two buildings with all of my stuff on my back, because I didn't have a home in either one of them." Manager1* |
| Struggle: Prospective strategic leader to fire-fighter | • *"The way the job's changed...it's become significantly busier and the ability to function in the strategic and managerial role has really deteriorated." Manager2*<br>• *"So just this picture of this extreme busyness, it's, you know, the wheels are falling off really." Manager2*<br>• *"I'm juggling, I'm not spinning plates in a good way... That can really leave me feeling quite low…I'm overwhelmed, I've got a stupid job, I can't do it all, this is ridiculous." Manager5*<br>• *"I think we were in, you know, panic mode a lot." Manager4*<br>• *"I'm immersed in the mechanics and I wish I wasn't." Manager1*<br>• *"So really, in a lot of ways, I'm not much more than a PA." Manager2*<br>• *"It's just you're a sort of resource... [people] thinking you're just some sort of mega administrator with limitless time." Manager4*<br>• *"Maybe it's me but you're not the lead for the project, you are the administrator." Manager4*<br>• *"I get frustrated because I don't have the admin support." Manager3*<br>• *"The problem is, is the workload. The workload is absolutely mental." Manager2* |
| Struggle: Unaccountable to held to account | • *"There's no way it will be [ready], it's nowhere near finished. I flagged up verbally, I've written to [the Dean] this morning as well, he doesn't seem to accept...he's quite good when he's playing hard with other people, it's not so good when he's playing hard with you, is it? But yes, so he seems completely stubborn about it." Manager2*<br>• *"But I think with this [deadline] there's a sort of magical thinking." Manager4*<br>• *"It'll be for me to sort out because I can't hand it to anyone else within the faculty and ask them to sort it out." Manager3*<br>• *"I know that sounds like I'm micro managing but I do not have a team who are in a fit state to write that documentation at the moment to be frank." Manager5*<br>• *"It comes to the point where you think it's been a long time since I had a weekend that wasn't written off. It's abhorrent, really." Manager1*<br>• *"... you used to just walk away but like now it's really, really difficult isn't it. Right now you'd be crucified, oh I think I'm going to be ill for two weeks." Manager3* |
| Struggle: Desirable shared identity to undesirable imposed identity | • *"They've got, your typical school-leaving students, with a clutch of 'A' Levels... fairly traditional, quite capable but crucially reasonably independent and self-reliant students." Manager2*<br>• *"I think they ...like [my specialism] but there's a slight kind of, well we do it like this and that's probably the best way to do it." Manager5*<br>• *"[The Dean] is obviously there because it's Architecture and it's his students and if there are any group of students that he can acknowledge that's worth protecting it's the post graduate Architects." Manager4* |

### *7.4.4 Post Merger Identity*

By the end of the change, both academics and managers appeared to have repaired their self identity as expert lecturers and specialist practitioners, and as experienced and competent managers. In fact, for both, there was evidence that they had an

enhanced self-identity and the identity struggles were very much reduced. The previous section on identity struggles showed that both academics and managers responded to struggles not through pushback, although there were criticisms and venting of frustrations, but mainly by adopting new practices, in spite of the challenges in doing so, and working through them until people gained competence and confidence which repaired, and often enhanced, self-identity. Imposed identity regulation, which was difficult to avoid and initially appeared to undermine academics' identity and trigger identity struggles, also seemed to provide a process through which individuals could repair and enhance their identity over time, often in ways that seemed to progress the change process in line with the Dean's vision. The next section analyses the work identity of academics and managers at the end of the change process.

#### *7.4.4.1 Academics - Post Merger Identity*

By the end of the merger (the end of the full first academic year as a single faculty), academics appeared to have repaired their self-identity as expert lecturers and specialist practitioners and to have enhanced their identity as more Arts-centred lecturers. For each of the main identity struggles there were strengthening factors (in italics below) which, it is argued here, enabled academics and managers to transition to this enhanced identity. Table 7-7 provides a summary with supporting quotes and links to the identity struggles.

By the end of the merger period significant progress had been made in *growing the faculty reputation* which seemed to help to enhance academics' self-identity as members of a more highly regarded Arts faculty. Having survived a year-long inculcation into a range of new practices, academics were no longer beginners but had *gained valuable learning and experience* which appeared to help them to adapt and to repair their sense of identity as competent and experienced academics. Academics had spoken of feeling judged and challenged by the level of oversight, transparency and competition. However, by the end of the year, they had *successfully accomplished these challenges* and expressions of anxiety were replaced by expressions of self-congratulation and a sense of achievement. Having spent a year experiencing new practices, such as the studio system, evidence indicated that academics also had a much *better understanding of benefits of*

*conformity* through implementing the changes fully, rather than adapting them or watering them down. The expertise they had gained appeared to enhance their self-identity as Arts professionals as they were now experts in a system that was more sympathetic to Arts, as well as being used by other top Art & Design schools, as well as Architecture schools. By the end of the year, it was also evident that academics had *rebuilt their relationship with their students* who had experienced the studio system for themselves and appeared to have come to understand and appreciate the changes. For example, academics reported that students had developed a sense of home and community within their studio space. This also appeared to help to repair and strengthen their identity as competent lecturers. Finally, by the end of the academic year, people spoke about a sense that the worst was behind them and, having put their practitioner or researcher identity on temporary hold, there would now be *more time* to reengage with practice and research and to re-establish their identity as lecturer-practitioners.

**Table 7-7 Post Merger Identity (Academics)**

| Strengthened By | |
|---|---|
| Growing reputation of faculty<br><br>Struggle: *survival to aspiration* | • *"At least we're not a laughing stock, at least we can brag about being number two now." Academic3*<br>• *"The thing that I thought was absolutely amazing was when they got that website up…that for me was like we're here." Academic4*<br>• *"And I think what [the Dean's] been doing...I think has been good, excellent...I think things seem quite positive for the future." Academic2*<br>• *"The website's way better… that whole side of it: branding and how it looks and so on is really good so I'm hopeful for that." Academic3* |
| Gained learning & experience<br><br>Struggle: *expert to beginner* | • *"We should feel very different next year because when we start in September I'll know what my studio is, I'll know what my new modules are having delivered them." Academic3*<br>• *"So I think it will be easier and more enjoyable [next year]. I'll be able to do more with the students because I'll be more confident." Academic3*<br>• "*I think now what we need to do now is say "okay, I sort of know what we need to do." Academic1*<br>• *"Next year we're going to formalise that. So we might have a formal system of tutorials which are compulsory…I'd like to nail that down for next year I think." Academic2* |
| Successfully accomplished challenges<br><br>Struggle: *unchallenged to challenged* | • *"At the end of term this year...[my colleague] said, well, well done. We actually kind of managed to get through this without any major problems." Academic2*<br>• *"And in some ways I got to the end and I'm not sure how I got there. Do you know what I mean?" Academic1*<br>• *"I think we seem to still be here after a year with all the courses." Academic5* |
| Rebuilt relationship with students<br><br>Struggle: *student trust* | • *"One or two of the students, now, have come back to me saying they filled in their National Student Survey [in February] and they're regretting what they said [by June]." Academic4*<br>• *"We won the [national Student Design Award] which was an amazing thing...I was really hot on the research and the person who won...was* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *to mistrust* | *going to leave because he said 'we are doing too much research' and I said, 'no, I'm telling you now, all of this research is going to work for you' and it did. But it was such a relief in such a way. It sort of justifies the angst that we all went through." Academic1*<br>• *"In my second year group they acted as a studio community which made them very strong and it was excellent and they enjoyed it." Academic1*<br>• *"So it's quite seductive going into a [studio] group and wanting to stay in a group, a lot of students say, I want to choose you again next year." Academic1* |
| Better understanding of benefits of conformity<br><br>Struggle: *freedom to conformity* | • *"The studio system [went well], I enjoyed it because I had autonomy… although I didn't have enough time I think it was good." Academic1*<br>• *"The studio system is much better and that, I would say, was definitely a positive change because it's more open." Academic4*<br>• *"The philosophy isn't too far away; it's different but I think they understand and appreciate what we do here. I think [the Dean], seemingly is supporting us." Academic3*<br>• *"When it stretches through it's very much a culture you don't see with other universities, either, because that culture was not there with any of the other universities I ever went to except the Royal College, that's the only one that had that kind of culture…So, although the work's not on the same level that sense of culture is." Academic4* |
| More time<br><br>• Struggle: *lecturer-practitioner to academic lecturer* | • *"That's another thing I'm doing right now [end of academic year] is to try and pick that [my research] up again a little bit." Academic2*<br>• *"[My colleague] is coming out of a meeting now [end of academic year] about their research, because she's going to be going into the REF." Academic5*<br>• *"I think that if I have learnt anything this year it is about the fact that I have got to now [end of academic year], anything I haven't done this year that I think I should have done I need to try and do it." Academic1* |

#### *7.4.4.2 Academic Managers - Post Merger Identity*

By the end of the academic year, there was evidence to indicate that managers had repaired their self-identity as experienced and competent managers and enhanced their self-identity as strategic leaders. For each struggle there was a main factor (in italics below) which seemed to help this move forward towards resolution, in ways that repaired, strengthened or enhanced self-identity and which frequently appeared to progress the change process in line with the Dean's vision (Table 7-8 provides supporting quotes).

The *growing reputation of the merged faculty* appeared to strengthen and enhance their identity as Arts managers as they spoke about significant progress that had been made towards becoming a more prestigious faculty. Managers talked about how they had *gained experience and achieved success* in implementing significant change which seemed to enhance their self-identity as competent leaders. After a year of co-location and regular meetings, evidence indicated that managers had learned to adapt and to *balance their dual-identity* as both FMG member and team leader, and were now proud to be part of a successful senior team as well as a team

leader. The Dean had proved reluctant to reduce the workload. However, by the end of the merger process, encouraged by the Dean and anxious to reduce the extreme hours they were working, managers spoke of finding ways to restructure and *to understand how to operate more strategically*. This increased sense of autonomy and control, seemed to enhance their identity as strategic leaders. By the end of the year, managers talked about becoming accustomed to being held to account and had successfully *met deadlines*. Missing a deadline no longer appeared to be a threat to their self identity as competent managers. This could have been detrimental to the change process, however, the Dean remained a formal and slightly remote figure, and it was evident that managers still strove to clear actions points whenever possible. The success of Art & Design over the academic year, for example in winning competitions and prizes, helped to provide *evidence of quality* which seemed to redress the sense that they were inferior to Architecture and enhanced managers identity esteem. This also seemed to provide validation of the new practices as there was less evidence of criticism that it was one specialism imposing their standards on another.

**Table 7-8 Post Merger Identity (Managers)**

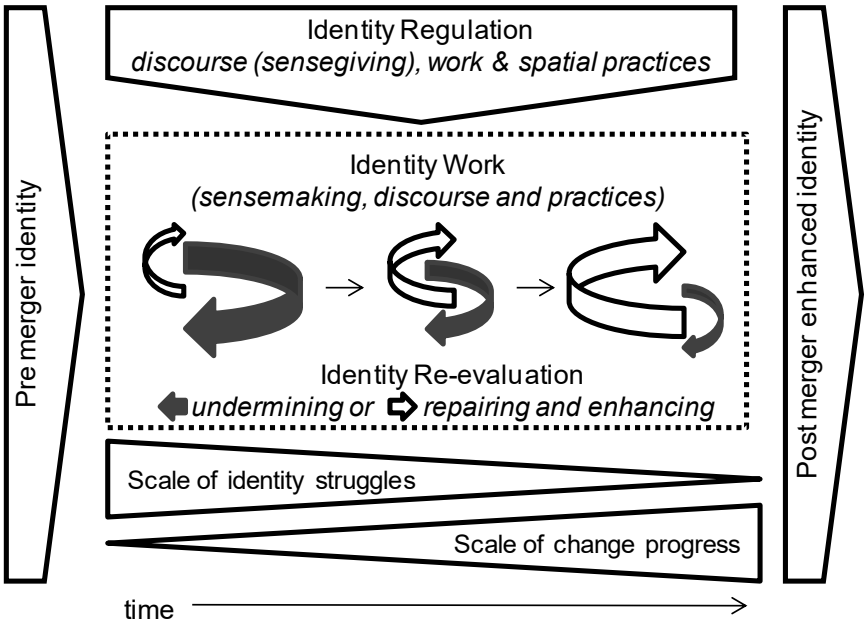
| Strengthened By | |
|---|---|
| Growing reputation of faculty<br><br>*Struggle: threatened to challenged* | • *"I think we had a lot of success stories this year to talk about and got some nice coverage in the press...we had great press, I mean fantastic." Manager4*<br>• *"[Staff] really liked the [new] brand...they really like being [new name]." Manager2*<br>• *"Our recruitment has been quite strong so... our conversion, I think, is the best in the university." Manager4* |
| Experience & success<br><br>*Struggle: confident & competent to tested & uncertain* | • *"We've done an amazing amount, you know, we really have and when you write it all up and read it all out, you know, it's like, Jesus!" Manager1*<br>• *"So it's having something that now we are on top of, eight months, nine months down the line." Manager3*<br>• *"Recently a couple of people have said, '… it's really good the way you've seen the faculty' and I thought well, that feels like I've landed." Manager4*<br>• *"It feels like it's been years and years and actually, it's just a year. Actually, we've come a long way." Manager4* |
| Able to balance dual identity<br><br>*Struggle: team leader to dual FMG identity* | • *"We are much more of a faculty which again goes back to this collegiate thing... sense that [FMG] are being more open...confidence to express feelings." Manager3*<br>• *"I think being located together, slowly seeing the cracks that each of the team have, that they don't present at the faculty management group… But seeing that, through overhearing expletives, exclamations, horror, panic ... you know that they are trying their hardest and we are all experiencing the same problem." Manager1*<br>• *"I wouldn't really say that I have any different friends than I had 3-months ago. But we have found a way to navigate into each other's lives, you know." Manager1*<br>• *"I thought, 'I actually need to go and talk to this person', and I went to talk to* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *[one of my team] and he pulled up a chair and he sat me down and he said, that stuff was not about you, I think you're wonderful'." Manager3*<br>• *"At the start of the week [of the Summer Show] the students really disliked me and...by the end of the week, most of the students were asking my advice. So, it was quite reaffirming to me that they...kept running at me and telling me good news." Manager1* |
| Understanding how to operate strategically<br><br>*Struggle: prospective strategic leader to. fire-fighter* | • *"There are lots of plans we've got that…[we can do] once we can try to get the project team in place so we're not living so hand to mouth in terms of those more strategic activities that we wanted to do." Manager1*<br>• *"So I've been looking at structuring, what would be really good is something between a PA and a really good administrator." Manager5*<br>• *"I've got strategic long term views of how I get them more integrated." Manager3*<br>• *"Our project team is people who are going to do brilliant things like they are going to be data mining for us, finding out what are other people offering – we haven't got the time to do this." Manager2*<br>• *"I think now I have got the measure of which of those decisions are really mine...I know now that if I needed something to happen with staff that I could make it happen…If I needed to re-profile the area…I think it's probably helping me feeling slightly more like … I have got some teeth if I choose to use them." Manager1 [shortened version in main body]* |
| Meeting deadlines<br><br>*Struggle: unaccountable to held to account* | • *"I'm still very nervous with [the Dean] and perhaps I shouldn't be but I am because of that measure of respect if you like. So with that measure of respect comes the nervousness." Manager3*<br>• *"I've tried to explain there are things we cannot do... he will eventually accept it...especially if its rationally put forward, eventually he has to trust you." Manager4*<br>• *"I do find [the Dean] quite Head Mastery... there's a bit of me that's a bit sort of like, Ooh, seeing the Head Master about something" Manager5* |
| Evidencing quality e.g. prizes<br><br>*Struggle: desirable shared identity to undesirable imposed identity* | • *"We're starting to get some really significant national competition prize winners consistently across the school and industry is much more seriously looking at us for creative students which, I think, are all great quality indicators." Manager1*<br>• *"[The studio approach] has generated a lot of enthusiasm and excitement, it's very unusual for [my discipline] to be delivered in that way… it engages the students and there's a sense of ownership and sense of community." Manager5*<br>• *"So, all of that hard work that's been happening behind the scenes in the studio seems to be paying off at this point of the year." Manager2*<br>• *"A 'gone well' has been really clear, evidential proof that some of the areas that I felt were the strongest in the school, have really excelled." Manager1* |

### *7.4.5 Summary of Identity Change Journey*

The process model in Figure 7-1 shows the identity change journey for both academics and managers.

**Figure 7-1 Identity Change Journey**




The model shows that both had a *pre-merger identity* (italics denote key terms in the model) which was impacted by the merger. The Dean's discursive sensegiving about the change, the imposition of new work practices and spatial changes, such as co-location, acted as a form of *identity regulation* and triggered identity work in the change recipients. The central box labelled '*identity work'* depicts the process of identity struggle over time as the identity regulation impacted on individual's self identity in ways that were undermining, or repairing and enhancing. Recipients' identity work involved reflecting and sensemaking on the changes and re-evaluating their self-identity over time. Their identity work also involved talk, such as venting their frustrations, and practices, such as setting up a regular meeting with their team. Initially (shown through the first pair of arrows), it was mainly the Dean's discursive practices, such as the vision, that provided encouragement for people to see the merger as an opportunity for identity growth and enhancement. However, this is the smaller of the first two arrows, gently pushing in the direction of an enhanced future identity. The model depicts a much thicker arrow pulling away from the opportunity for an enhanced self-identity as people experienced new work practices for the first time which are a significant change to their everyday experience. Re-evaluating their self-identity at this stage, people appeared to feel that the changes were strongly undermining their sense of identity as expert and competent. As the change progressed, the middle pair of arrows show a more equally balanced struggle where regulation helped to repair and enhance identity as people experimented with the

new practices and adapted and learned through doing. However, other aspects of regulation continued to undermine, such as the sense that 'Architecture knows best' or the inability to find time for strategic thinking. People expressed this feeling using terms such as 'love-hate'.

> *"It's a sort of love hate thing... I was in 'oh God, isn't it all awful, I can't cope'. I was talking to somebody about that and then the next sentence was with somebody else in a different corridor 'God, this is great!' and I said 'yeah, this is great!' and I was thinking, 'what am I doing, who the hell am I anymore!'" Academic4*

By the end of the change process (the third pair of arrows) the impact of regulation was mainly enhancing and repairing people's self-identity (shown by the thicker arrow). Both managers and academics had adopted the new practices and experienced the benefits for themselves; there was evidence that the faculty reputation was growing, and people expressed a great sense of pride in their achievements. This progression is also reflected in the '*scale of identity struggles'* which is shown to be reducing over time. Over the same period, the implementation of change ('*scale of change progress'*) is shown as moving forward in spite of the identity struggles. Rather than holding up the change progress, the earlier analysis showed that people frequently responded to identity struggles by working hard to repair them, often in ways that helped to progress the change process in line with the Dean's vision. For example, academics strived to re-establish the trust of their students. At the end of the time period the process shows a '*post merger enhanced identity*'. The arrow points to the right to indicate that this is not a static end position but a dynamic snapshot which will continue to unfold.

### 7.5 Discussion

This study takes two interesting differences between my data and the existing literature as a way to contribute to existing understanding about the nature of identity work and the role of identity work in the change process. I wanted to understand why practices, which existing literature indicates are important, seem particularly so in this case. I also wanted to understand why the change recipients, who experienced pain and anxiety through their identity struggles, seem to come out with an enhanced self-identity at the end, and to do so in ways which seemed to help the merger to progress in line with the Dean's plan. In each of these two areas, I sought to understand why and to understand the implications for theory.

First, I present a summary process model which explains how individual identity change occurs over time. Second, I show that work practices are important in both regulating identity and in how people respond through their identity work. My third contribution is to show that whilst work practices are important forms of identity regulation, they are more powerful when combined with discursive forms of regulation. I explain how the combination of the two can mitigate painful identity struggles and help recipients to emerge with an enhanced self-identity. Fourth and finally, I contribute to a small number of studies that consider space as a form of identity regulation.

First, Figure 7-1 summarises my findings of how individual identity work unfolds during a merger. In doing so it contributes to a small number of in-depth process studies which model individual identity change over time. Unusually, the model shows that identity struggle leads to a 'positive' impact on individuals' self-identity and identity work which helps to progress the change process in line with the initial plan. It also shows that non-discursive forms of identity regulation are an important feature of identity regulation. Pratt et al. (2006) model individual identity change as part of a process of professional training rather than strategic change. However, their model also shows the cyclical nature of identity change, where work and learning occurring in cycles over time, and where 'identity work violations' lead to constructive identity customisation rather than resistance (Pratt et al. 2006). My study builds on this by showing that strategic change, which involves significant new learning, might demonstrate similar characteristics. These are explored in more depth below.

Ybema (2010) argues that identity work involves 'temporal self-understandings', where people make sense of who I am today through comparison with who I was in the past or who I hope to be in the future. In Langley et al (2012), for example, we see various examples such as a nostalgic view of the past, dissatisfaction with the present and the expectation of an even more dissatisfying future which influences people's sense of self. My study reveals dissatisfaction with the past, and with the present (difficult struggles) but a 'postalgic' expectation of a more satisfying future, should the struggles be resolved. In my study both academics and managers endure painful identity struggles in order to attain an enhanced future identity. As part of this effort, I observe both managers and academics putting important aspects of their

identity as practitioners, researchers, carers on temporary hold in order to protect and enhance their predominant identity at work. This responds to Brown (2015) who argues there is little research that considers, for example, the temporal trade-offs people make between different identities at different times, or the ability to tolerate one identity if it leads to another which is prized.

Second, I find that work practices are important in both regulating identity and in how people respond through their identity work. My study builds on others that argue that non-discursive practices are important in individual identity construction (Alvesson et al. 2008; Beech 2008; Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wieland 2010). In this case, managers and academics appeared to buy-in to the Dean's long term vision. However, it was in the implementation where people found out what it really meant to be a studio academic or a more strategic manager. It was through their experience of adopting new practices that felt demanding, exposing, limiting and imposed, that the main identity struggles occurred. The new practices also increased the level of oversight, transparency and accountability and led to increased criticism from students, peers and managers, which added to feelings of doubt about their own ability. However, this same oversight and rigour also made it difficult to avoid the new practices, to change them significantly or to renegotiate the speed of implementation, without loss of face in front of others. In my case, unlike many others (for example, Garcia and Hardy 2007; Humphreys and Brown 2002; Langley et al. 2012), the predominant way in which managers responded to intense regulation and identity struggle was to implement the new work practice as far as possible in line with the Dean's intent, for example, through working long hours to meet deadlines. Doing so enabled managers and academics to repair and strengthen their self-identity, whilst failing to do so undermined their identity as competent experts in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. Whilst different to other studies, these findings are consistent with Pratt et al. (2006) who argue that new work activities that involve learning and the establishment of competence, which are imposed with little 'job discretion', such as the 'boot camp' style training of medical professionals or the intensive imposition of new work practices experienced in my study, can motivate recipients to change and take on the new identity. In both studies, individuals experiencing identity violations are forced to continue with new work practices but, in doing so, acquire new skills or better results, which they find to

be identity enhancing.

My study also reveals that work practices act as an important form of identity regulation when they influence the frequency and nature of observation by others and interaction with others. This observation builds on Wieland (2010) and Langley et al. (2012) who argue that identity work that occurs in interaction with others also provides a form of identity regulation for others. In my case, in studio pitches and cross-faculty studio presentations academics strengthened their self-identity by working hard to make sure their studio performed well, or in the shared and open plan office managers arrived early to avoid the identity diminishing experience of being the last person in. In each case this sent regulating signals to others about the standards they needed to meet and encouraged them to 'raise their game'. Wieland (2010) argues that identity is socially constructed and emerges discursively from within the communities in which people work. However, in my study I show how this arises from a more intentional attempt to increase transparency and competition through work practices that deliberately expose people to interaction and encourage 'game raising' identity work. This is also consistent with Pratt et al. (2006) who show that the impact of imposed new work activities is heightened when recipients are also 'encapsulated' such that there are limited alternative sources of sensemaking, other than from the change leaders. In my study this occurred through the move of FMG into a single shared location, and the intensity of workload which allowed little opportunity for academics or managers to debate the activities with others or reflect on them as they were too busy just trying to 'muddle through'.

The struggle to become a strategic leader or a studio academic was painful and intense, typifying the definition by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) that regulation must have valency, an ability to invoke an emotional response from the perspective of the recipient, and which confirms or disrupts their existing self-identity. From a critical perspective, it is hard to counter the feeling that the level of identity regulation from the Dean was 'oppressive' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) and 'subjugating' (Garcia and Hardy 2007) and that the response of academics and managers who strove to adopt the new practices was 'docile' and 'conforming' (Alvesson 2010). However, my study builds on others (Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Pratt et al. 2006; Wieland 2010) who take a more neutral view of regulation. This leads to my third

contribution which explains how the combination of identity regulation through both work practices and discursive regulation over time contributed to recipients' willingness to persist through the identity change process, despite painful identity struggles, and to emerge with an enhanced self-identity. In doing so I also contribute to longitudinal studies that consider the impact of identity work on the strategic change process and outcomes (Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2016; Langley et al. 2012; Mallett and Wapshott 2012; Reissner 2010; Thomas and Linstead 2002).

In my study the Dean presented a vision that led both academics and managers to believe that implementing the Dean's planned changes would enhance their own self-identity as lecturer-practitioners, through changes such as the studio system, and as academic managers, through a greater focus on strategic leadership, and for both through the enhanced prestige and reputation of the combined faculty. This supports the assertion by Langley et al. (2012) that skilful change managers might be able to anticipate identity issues and reposition changes in ways that offer hope for identity renewal, and mitigate people's sense of identity loss during change. We know from existing studies that academics and creative practitioners are challenging to manage (for example, Beech et al. 2012; Brown et al. 2010; Humphreys and Brown 2002) and increased oversight, interference and managerialism have often led to pushback. However, in my study the Dean's vision, plus his ongoing communication of good news stories, provided an incentive to adopt the new work practices, in anticipation of making progress towards an enhanced self-identity. This helped to mitigate the pain of difficult and challenging change, despite the identity struggles it invoked. My research extends Pratt et al. (2006) by showing that for non or 'quasi' professionals such as academics and academic managers, work content (the nature of work) and process (the intensity of work) result in work-identity integrity violations which motivate identity change, and that these work activities can be deliberately orchestrated by change leaders in order to encourage recipients to question who they are and what they do. However, I argue that, unlike medical residents, or other professionals undergoing intensive training which has been refined and legitimised over many years and which is vital to furthering their career, non-professionals do not necessarily aspire to advance in the direction that the change leader wishes to take them. For non-professionals this process is therefore far more precarious and could easily back fire and generate significant resistance.

My study builds on Pratt et al. (2006) by demonstrating that for non-professionals a successful process of identity work and learning additionally requires an inspiring vision which is set out from the start and constantly reinforced over time, linking the change to an enhanced future self-identity. This can help to provide much needed motivation to keep going with the change when identity struggles occur and people begin to question the process.

This finding also supports Gotsi et al. (2010) who argue that skilful managerial efforts can help recipients to construct a more 'positive' identity and to productively cope with identity tension. In their study this was achieved through a paradoxical approach that valued integration as well as differentiation of recipients' artistic and commercial identities (Gotsi et al. 2010). In my study this was achieved through intensive work practices through which people learned how to be a more strategic leader or studio lecturer through their own experience, and through their observation of others and feedback from others, and through skilful discursive regulation by the Dean through which they envisioned an enhanced future self-identity. Academics and managers were continually reminded of their future identity goals through good news stories, which appeared to mitigate the pain of the new work practices and bolster their courage to face identity struggles head on and implement the new practices as fully as possible, in order to attain their desired future identity quickly and fully. Drawing on Ybema (2010), managers and academics' desire to avoid an unsatisfactory past identity, as part of a poorly regarded faculty, at constant risk of closure also provided an incentive to stick with the Dean's program.

The importance in my study of a desirable future identity also contributes to existing studies of identity growth towards an ideal or positive self (Dutton et al. 2010; Wieland 2010). For example, in Wieland's (2010) study self-identity is socially constructed, through 'ideal selves', where individuals strive to conform to social norms in order to be seen as 'good' (in their own eyes and the eyes of others) and to be socially accepted. My case builds on this and shows that this process can be 'stacked in favour' of a desired vision, for example, by bringing Art & Design managers into closer everyday contact with Architecture such that they could observe and interact with them and understand what it meant to be an effective manager in a more successful faculty. My study also supports Dutton et al.

(2010:552) who theorise that people develop 'growing self-construals' linked to 'achievement' or 'learning' or 'helping' that then influence them to act in ways that enhance their sense of 'progressive self-change'. In my case, academics and managers, encouraged by the Dean, interpreted the change as an opportunity for identity enhancement, which encouraged them to act in ways that helped to deliver the change in the way the Dean intended, and to persist even as the changes undermined and challenged their identity. From a critical perspective, the future identity can be seen as a 'postalgic discourse' (Ybema 2010) which offers an imaginary fantasy future that may never be fulfilled. Brown and Coupland (2015) argue that the search for a treasured identity may be an illusory goal, however, the identity work that results can lead to action towards goals. In my case, at the end of the study, identity work had resulted in action that was beneficial in delivering the planned change outcomes and in strengthening, managers and academics self-identity.

My fourth contribution is to studies of space in identity regulation (Gotsi et al. 2010; Langley et al. 2012; Wasserman and Frenkel 2011). I show that identity regulation through relational spatial changes, such as the re-location to a shared office, can support managers in moving from a predominant team-leader identity to a more balanced work-identity with concern for both their own team and the wider management group. The move to a studio based home room also shaped the teaching style of academics and their interaction with students. Initially the studio rooms undermined academics sense of identity as many were poorly equipped, noisy and unfamiliar. However, over time they were identity enhancing as they provided a sense of community and belonging for students with the academic as the lead figure of this more Arts-centred studio practice.

I argued earlier that identity work occurs in interaction with others and provides a form of identity regulation for others (Langley et al. 2012; Wieland 2010) and that regulation through work practices can be designed to do this intentionally. Space can also be used intentionally to 'encapsulate' sensemaking (Pratt 2000; Pratt et al. 2006) by limiting interactions that people have with people who might criticise the change process and increasing opportunities for like-minded or change leader sensegiving. In my study this interaction was intentionally facilitated through the

move to a shared and open plan office, with FMG members from both Art & Design and Architecture. The relational spatial change increased the interaction between managers and thus the opportunities for influencing, and being influenced by, each others identity work, such as arriving early or dressing smartly. The re-location also reconstructed the frequency and nature of social interaction between managers and their teams, reducing accessibility and informality (dropping in for a chat), which forced managers to re-think their relationship with their teams, and provided the opportunity to establish a dual-identity as both team leader and FMG member. The space itself was more business-like and managers' experience of moving in to it was akin to the first day in a new organisation, encouraging and supporting them to consider their identity afresh. In the same way, academics experienced a sense of a new start and a new way of operating when they began to teach in the studio space. My work builds on Gotsi et al. (2010) who reveal that space, such as a business war room, can operate as a medium for identity differentiation and enable people to focus, within that particular space, on a particular identity. In my case, the shared office space encouraged and enabled managers to focus on and develop their identity as an FMG member, and the studio space helped academics to develop their identity as studio leaders.

### 7.6 Boundary Conditions

This is a single site case study focussed on 10 participants who are academics and managers. A number of conditions might limit the extent to which this study is more widely generalisable. First, the study refers to a modern UK university that was granted university status in 1992. This raises the question of whether the findings will apply in a non university context, or even in other types of university, such as traditional universities, where the right to 'academic freedom' might encourage academics to fiercely resist any change that was perceived to be top down and imposed. Also, whether in such institutions, individuals' predominant work-identity might relate to research rather than teaching or managing and this might also lead to different outcomes or the need for a different form of vision. Other boundary conditions include the availability of an identity enhancing vision and the opportunity to introduce work practices that help people to move towards the vision in ways that enhance their identity and help the change process. In other circumstances, such as retrenchment or the introduction of bureaucratic management oversight, it may be

very difficult to find an identity upside to promote in order to gain the buy-in of participants to an unwelcome change process.

The findings in my study may also be difficult to replicate because the change leader in my study, a trained Architect, was a professional, like the change leader in Pratt et al. (2006), who was familiar with intensive professional training practices and had experience of leading both students and academics through new work practices which would trigger identity struggles. Even if a similar exercise was attempted in another organisation, it might take an equally skilled and experienced change leader to design, lead and manage the process successfully. However, the similarity with other studies, suggests this study is more widely generalisable. For example; the connection with Gotsi et al. (2010) and the role of space in identity change, with Langley et al. (2012) and Wieland (2010) and the importance of work practices as well as discursive practices in identity change, and with Pratt et al. (2006) who also demonstrate that the imposition of detailed work activities, where there is low discretion to amend them, can motivate individuals to change their identity.

### 7.7 Future Research

Future research might usefully explore internal mergers in a non university setting, such as commercial organisations, that involve one group taking on the work practices of another to understand; how identity struggles occur, whether the presence of a strong vision is used to create an enhanced future identity, whether the work practices are closely monitored to ensure they are fully adopted, and how space is used to regulate identity. In addition, an interesting aspect of my study is the similarity with Pratt et al. (2006) where both include an intensive, ‘boot camp’ like experience, with a deliberate and imposed set of work activities which trigger identity violations and encourage learning. It would be interesting to explore other situations where work practices that are legitimate in professional training, such as doctors or soldiers or intensive MBA courses, are applied in non professional contexts such as universities, the public sector or commerce.

### 7.8 Conclusions and Implications for Practice

The aim of this study was to contribute to existing understanding about the nature of identity work and the role of identity work in the change process. I wanted to

understand why work practices seem particularly important in this case and why change recipients, despite experiencing difficult identity struggles, seem to emerge with an enhanced self-identity, and to do so in ways that helped to deliver the change in line with the Dean's vision.. From my findings I conclude that identity change during a merger occurs through four phases which include a pre-merger identity, identity regulation, identity work in response to regulation and the establishment of a post merger identity. I conclude that work practices are important because identity is shaped by what people do every day. In this case, new work practices invoked identity struggles, which initially undermined self-identity. However, through the combination of an inspiring vision which offered the prospect of an enhanced future identity, and a tightly regulated process to oversee the implementation of new work practices, people found they had little choice but to implement the new practices as the Dean intended. However, they were also motivated to do so, in order to repair their self-identity and, in doing so, made progress towards an enhanced self-identity and helped to deliver the change process as it was intended by the Dean.

These findings have implications for practice. They suggest that managers who want to implement change should be mindful of the identity work the change is likely to invoke and position the change in ways that appeal to individuals' self-identity. Prevailing wisdom might suggest that resistance to change is reduced through consultation and giving individuals the freedom and flexibility to implement change in their own way. However, this might be different where the change is much needed and potentially even welcomed but is tough 'medicine', for example, a push to improve quality which challenges people's existing sense of competence and expertise. In this case skilful managers might implement the change through new work activities which will knowingly trigger identity struggles but also provide the experiences needed for individuals to learn and develop. In this case, as with the training of medical residents (Pratt et al. 2006), in order for the process to work successfully it's important that there is minimal discretion to change it, and ideally that participants have limited opportunities for sensemaking with people outside the change and more opportunities for close change leader sensegiving. This might be achieved through changes to space such as relocation.

# Chapter 8: Conclusions

## 8.1 Introduction

In this thesis I draw on qualitative data from a real-time, two-year empirical study to develop a number of theoretical contributions, particularly with regard to the role of leader sensegiving in meetings in sustaining strategic change over time (Chapter 5), the process of deliberate organisational identity change (Chapter 6) and the process of identity work during strategic change (Chapter 7). In addition, the thesis contributes more widely to the SAP community. Initial engagement with the SAP literature guided my choice of research site and data collection strategy. I defined my topic area using existing definitions of the Strategy as Practice field as a guide:

> "*a study of strategic change development and progression as a situated activity, that seeks to plausibly explain how strategy work is socially accomplished through the actions and interactions of senior and middle managers and the situated practices they draw upon".*

Whilst initially focused on strategic initiatives, in light of the case site, I adopted a more emergent approach and collected data that I could analyse from a number of different SAP perspectives. During the two years of data collection a number of themes emerged, however, it was not until collection was complete that the three main research questions were fully developed and refined and each became a separate chapter in the research. The chapters address three different research questions:

- How do senior executives sustain strategic change initiatives through their sensemaking and sensegiving in change management meetings? (Chapter 5)
- How can senior executives intentionally drive a process of organisational identity change? How can a change leader facilitate the process through discursive, material and work practice interventions? (Chapter 6)
- How do individuals make the transition to a new organisation identity as part of strategic change? In particular, why do practices, which existing literature suggests are important, seem particularly so in this case and why does identity struggle seem to lead an enhanced self-identity for academics and managers and to help to deliver an intended change? (Chapter 7)

In this chapter, I summarise the contributions of the main chapters (5, 6 and 7). However, each chapter also contains its own specific section for conclusions, boundary conditions, implications for practice, and areas for further research. In this chapter I also consider the overarching contribution of the thesis to the SAP field and refer back to the earlier discussion about SAP in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) and the overall Research Methodology (Chapter 3).

## 8.2 Contribution to Research

In this section I summarise the contributions from my thesis to existing research.

### 8.2.1 Sustaining Change through Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Meetings

In Chapter 5 the first contribution is a process model which demonstrates how senior executives can sustain strategic change implementation over time through their sensemaking and sensegiving in meetings, leading to a preferred organisational reality in line with the change leaders initial planned intent. This model and the accompanying discussion also provide additional understanding of notions of 'sensegiving competence' (Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). The sensegiving system identified underpins sensegiving competence and has two components, the framing and influencing skills often highlighted by others, but also, processual skills to set up and manage sensegiving opportunities. The study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of types of leader sensegiving, such as sense-building, challenging, directing and managing, and the dynamic relationship between leader sensegiving and recipient response. Finally, I contribute more generally to Strategy as Practice literature on strategic episodes and meetings, responding to the call for greater understanding of the role of strategic episodes over time.

### 8.2.2 Deliberate Processes of Organisational Identity Change

The research in Chapter 6 focuses on the strategic change process overall, rather than the sensemaking and giving skill of the Dean as change leader, exploring the strategic change process as one of organisational identity change. The chapter considers how senior executives intentionally drive a process of organisational identity change, and how they can facilitate this process through discursive, material and work practice interventions. Here, I develop a process model of deliberate

organisational identity change which identifies how organisational identity change occurs through three sequential phases of 'developing and promoting new claims', 'building new claims' and 'living the claims'. I find that deliberate identity change is an experiential process and show that the transition to a new shared organisational identity can be intentionally shaped through this phased approach. I also show how this process is carefully orchestrated over time to monitor and influence recipient understanding, and how recipient's everyday behaviours and choices begin to align with the new claims. This process model builds on limited studies of planned identity change to identify a process through which identity change can be facilitated. The model also contributes to existing theory as it identifies differences in how labels-based and meaning-based identity change occurs. In addition, the model identifies the role of close management involvement in sensegiving to facilitate directed sensemaking; it also explains the extent to which ambiguity facilitates a deliberate identity change process. Finally, the model and discussion provide new understanding of the differences in the role of materiality during labels-based and meanings-based change.

### 8.2.3 Identity Regulation and Identity Work during Strategic Change

I present a summary process model in Chapter 7 which explains how individual identity change occurs over time in the strategic change process. I show that work practices are important in both regulating identity and in how people respond through their identity work. A further contribution is to show that, whilst work practices are important forms of identity regulation, they are more powerful when combined with discursive forms of regulation. I demonstrate how the two together can mitigate painful identity struggles and help recipients to emerge with an enhanced self-identity. Finally, I contribute to a small number of studies that consider space as a form of identity regulation.

### 8.2.4 Integrative Contribution to Strategy as Practice

The formulation of three detailed research questions was driven by iterative cycles between the data and the SAP literature. This process was used to identify emerging themes, such as the roles of the meetings in the change process, and to select a compelling theoretical approach, such as sensemaking, through which to analyse and interpret the empirical data. The final three areas of focus were selected on the

basis that they addressed the overall aims of the study from the broad research question ("...to plausibly explain how strategy work is socially accomplished...") and that they best answered questions such as, "what would strategy scholars find new and interesting about my data?" and, "which scholarly conversation might my data be able to add to and what might it say?". Thus, each chapter was designed to stand alone as a distinct scholarly contribution and the three together were not intended to be interdependent or to triangulate each other. However, the justification for three distinct chapters, from a SAP perspective, is that I have been able to draw on the breadth of my experience of two year's observation, interviewing and document collection but have also been able to delve into the minutiae of the data. For example, the meetings data in Chapter 5, the end to end process story in Chapter 6 and the interview data in Chapter 7. The thesis benefits from breadth, through lengthy engagement with the site, which is often associated with process research, but also depth, through the closeness to practice and immersion in detailed strategising activities that is associated with SAP research. This breadth and depth of both data and analysis might have been compromised, through 'data asphyxiation' (Pettigrew 1990), had I tried to 'eat the elephant' and produce a monograph, particularly at this early stage in my research career. Having completed the three, it was then possible to take a more considered view of how they collectively contribute to the SAP field. Adopting a process of 'progressive coherence' (Dittrich et al. 2015) this study helps to develop cumulative knowledge around areas of interest to SAP researchers. Here, I identify and discuss four areas of significance: closeness to top managers, closeness to meetings over time, dynamics between managers and recipients, and the importance of both discursive and non-discursive strategising activity.

#### 8.2.4.1 Closeness to Top Managers

Scholars have responded to SAP calls for close observation of what strategy practitioners actually do (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2007). However, Jarzabkowski (2008) notes a particular gap around what 'top managers' do within the strategy process. More recently there has been a renewed call for a focus on top managers and their strategising activities (Balogun et al. 2015; Balogun et al. 2016). Existing process research has focussed on top managers (Clark et al. 2010; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et al. 2010; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Gioia et al. 1994;

Labianca et al. 2001). However, this work has tended to focus on strategy initiation rather than change implementation. And indeed, whilst older process studies, such as those by Pettigrew (1985), did include a concern with senior executives, these studies were in fact a motivation for the SAP field, since it was argued that they failed to open "the black box" of process to understand what these managers were doing as they strategised and led change (Johnson et al. 2003). My study responds to calls for close observation of top manager strategising, for example, questions such as, "so what is it that top managers actually do in meetings to direct understanding?". I provide a detailed understanding of how a top manager interacts with his managers and how he steers and guides them over time, in order to deliver a realised change that is in line with his initial intent.

#### 8.2.4.2 Closeness to Meetings over Time

This thesis justifies Vaara and Whittington's (2012) call for longitudinal studies of strategic episodes over time. With a small number of exceptions (for example, Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Johnson et al. 2010), research, even in the SAP arena, has tended to treat meetings as discrete events (Kwon et al. 2014; Samra-Fredericks 2003; Whittle et al. 2015). My research responds to the question, "Why is it worth attending 'the same' meeting for two years?". I demonstrate that closeness to practice over time reveals patterns that are not available from snapshots of individual or disparate meetings. For example, the systematic way that the Dean established and maintained the meetings as a forum for sensegiving and as an opportunity to employ different sensegiving approaches. In contrast to Johnson et al.'s (2010) study of off-site workshops, it is the very consistency and regularity of the meetings that enables the Dean to alter the tempo of the meeting through subtle agenda changes that facilitate different types of sensegiving activity. SAP research has also tended to focus on executive level meetings, such as strategy workshops, which are often concerned with strategy formulation rather than implementation (Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008; Johnson et al. 2010; Kwon et al. 2014). However, my work shows the value of studying meetings between senior executives and middle managers, and meetings which go beyond strategy formulation to guide and sustain strategic change implementation.

#### 8.2.4.3 Dynamics between Managers and Recipients

In the Literature Review (Chapter 2) a fundamental tenet of the SAP approach is that strategising is a 'socially accomplished' activity (Hendry et al. 2010; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007). Strategising is also seen as a distributed activity involving senior and non-senior levels and different part of the organisations (Mantere 2008; Regnér 2003). This is particularly important in areas such as sensegiving during strategic change where people's interpretations of influence attempts may be different than intended and may impact change outcomes (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Mantere et al. 2012). A contribution of my study is that it demonstrates the importance of senior executive sensemaking and sensegiving during strategic change, but also shows how this is interpreted and made sense of by others in their organisation as recipients (Bartunek et al. 1999; Sonenshein 2010) and, importantly, how this interpretation might be shepherded and guided over time. In Chapter 5, for example, I show how different forms of sensegiving by the Dean result in different responses from recipients (different levels of sense-counter-challenging, aligning and disclosing) and how the Dean changes the agenda of meetings to facilitate these different forms of sensegiving. Chapter 6 is one of few studies of deliberate identity change, with the exception of Fiol (2002), that focus on both recipient responses and change leader sensegiving to understand what, of the change leaders actions, are significant to any change that occurs. In Chapter 7, I explore both the top manager identity regulation and also how recipients respond and interpret the change through their identity work. Combined, the three studies build a compelling justification for the SAP approach; they contribute to understanding of what top managers actually say or do in their strategising activities, but also the importance of dynamic interaction and consideration of how people interpret the activity and respond.

#### 8.2.4.4 Importance of both Discursive and Non-Discursive Strategising Activity

This thesis also contributes more generally to studies of sensemaking, identity and strategic change. Balogun et al. (2014) argue for the need to bring together discursive, material and sensemaking approaches. I consider both discursive and non-discursive strategising activities and, in doing so, respond to criticism that both sensemaking research (Cornelissen et al. 2014; Whiteman and Cooper 2011) and organisational identity studies (Harquail and Wilcox King 2010; Howard-Grenville et

al. 2013) pay insufficient attention to non-discursive practices. My work contributes to the SAP field by demonstrating that the SAP approach, with its focus on getting close to what strategists actually do, can contribute to a fuller and more nuanced understanding of theoretical constructs such as sensemaking and identity. For example, I show that discourse matters a great deal, however, in order to shape identity, other elements are important, such as work practices, space and material artefacts. Chapter 6 reveals that discourse is central during labels-based identity change. Conversely, new working practices that realise the claims through embedding them in every day actions are of particular importance for developing new meanings. In Chapter 7, spatial changes to a new shared office act as a form of identity regulation. In Chapter 5, my closeness to the same practitioners over time enables me to extend knowledge of sensegiving competence from patterns in a single episode (Rouleau and Balogun 2011) to patterns of sensemaking and sensegiving in meetings over time. I show that sensegiving competence goes beyond words and includes the processual skill to set up fora for sensegiving opportunities over time.

## 8.3 Limitations

The main chapters consider boundary conditions which limit the extent to which the findings in this thesis might be more widely transferable to other contexts. These are summarised here. I also discuss Gioia et al.'s (2013) notion of concept transferability and finally, consider limitations of the study in terms of my own research focus.

### 8.3.1 Boundary Conditions

Although there are a growing number of single site case studies in top publications (for example, Howard-Grenville et al. 2013; Mantere et al. 2012; Smets et al. 2015; Smets et al. 2012; Sonenshein 2010) the specificity of a case can impact its transferability to other settings. Gioia et al. (2013) argue that the development of abstract concepts that can be applied to other settings can aid transferability. Thus, in my thesis, the development of process models using 'second-order' research-centred themes and concepts (Gioia et al. 2013; Langley and Abdallah 2012) rather than first-order participant codes aids transferability to other settings. In my case some of the portability of these concepts is evident because something similar appears in other studies. For example, in Chapter 6 similarities are identified

between this process model and other studies of deliberate organisational identity change (Fiol 2002; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Ravasi and Phillips 2011; Ravasi and Schultz 2006).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that being clear about the empirical context helps the transferability of interpretive research as others can judge the degree of similarity and difference with another setting. In this study I explore strategic change; however, the context is a specific type of change, an internal merger. In other types of change, such as retrenchment it may not be possible to create, for example, an inspiring vision for the future. The case is also based on a UK university. Whilst other organisations, such as universities, public sector organisations or large companies, may share common features, such as the acceptance of meetings as a form of coordination, there may be differences even within seemingly similar settings. For example, in more research intensive universities, academics may resist top down change more assertively if they expect higher levels of academic freedom and if their identity is based more on their research than their teaching, or their sense of belonging to a particular faculty. Another specific feature of this case is the deliberate and top-down nature of the change. The thesis findings are less likely to be applicable to a much more emergent and consensually driven type of strategic change. Other features which may have aided the change leader, and not be available in other settings, include the geographical proximity of the merged teams and the experience, knowledge and reputation of the change leader.

### 8.3.2 Research Focus

In the introduction, two areas were mentioned which the study did not focus on: the context of merger and issues of power. A lack of focus on mergers is partly because, as a strategy practitioner, I thought strategic initiatives were an interesting and relevant topic, and something that strategy practitioners grapple with everyday. When this did not fit with the case site, I thought strategic change was similarly a challenge that strategy practitioners frequently face. The fact the case site was a merger was a secondary consideration. Thus, a limitation of the thesis is that there may be more that it could contribute to the merger literature (examples include Bartels et al. 2006; Elstak et al. 2015; Langley et al. 2012; Maguire and Phillips 2008; Mantere et al. 2012; Seo and Hill 2005; Vaara 2003; Vaara et al. 2005; van

Vuuren et al. 2010) than I have explored to date. For example, my research revealed that organisational identity change might differ between an internal merger (intra-organisational) and a merger between two legally separate organisations (inter-organisational). In inter-organisational merger studies, such as Clark et al. (2010), government 'quiet periods' limit leaders ability to engage in sensegiving communication with employees. Thus, a 'transitional identity' (Clark et al. 2010) may be more appropriate as there is a risk that the merger will not proceed and many activities are still tentative. However, my study shows that, in an internal merger, it may be possible to establish and communicate the new organisational identity earlier on, without need for a transitional identity, because there is no requirement to wait on government approvals.

SAP has drawn wider criticism for lack of consideration of issues of power (Carter et al. 2008). Undoubtedly there are issues of power in the case; however, a limitation of this thesis is that this is not a focus of my analysis. 'Leader sensegiving' in the meetings chapter (5) is a political exercise and a framing exercise, and 'identity regulation' (Chapter 7) is a form of control. In Chapter 6, the top down, deliberate nature of the organisational identity change clearly requires the exercise of power. Whilst position and resources and other forms of power are important, this research particularly shows that words matter as leader sensegiving shapes and influence recipient sensemaking. Beyond words, it shows that non-discursive actions, such as work practices, material practices and physical space also shape recipient meaning-making, in line with a desired intent. In doing these non-discursive elements are also important forms of power and control, particularly when used in combination with discursive practices.

### 8.4 Implications for Practice

The main chapters identify specific implications for practice. I include a brief sumary here and comment more generally on the value of SAP research for practioners. In Chapter 5 I suggests that managers should consider how they will provide and sustain leader sensegiving throughout change implementation. In Chapter 6 it is recommended that managers who want to implement change should consider identity issues upfront and focus on establishing a clear set of claims discursively, and then focus on the development of appropriate meanings through new work

practices. In Chapter 7 managers are encouraged to be mindful of the identity work that strategic change is likely to trigger and to position the change in ways that appeal to individual's self-identity. Managers are advised that the design of new work practices and use of space can provide a means to guide people through a process of challenging individual identity change. All three chapters recommend that managers give early consideration to issues of identity and sensegiving at the start of the change process.

More generally, this thesis adds to understanding of how research from a SAP perspective can respond to pressure from strategy practitioners to directly help them (Johnson et al. 2003). Feldman and Worline (2016) compare 'scientific rationality' which seeks universal truths or generalisable predictions with 'practical rationality' which helps managers solve problems within a particular context. SAP research aims to do this by providing insights about activities that are closely connected with what practitioners do, such as running a workshop or managing a change initiative (Johnson et al. 2007; Whittington 2006). Thus, this study focuses on strategic change because this is something that is important to managers; it is a frequent feature of contemporary organisations and, not least, because change implementation can lead to highly positive outcomes or disastrous consequences (Burnes 2005; Sonenshein 2010).

## 8.5 Methodological Implications

This section considers some of the methodological issues experienced during this research and the lessons learned for other researchers. Four areas are identified: Firstly, the decision to take a broad approach to data collection. Second, I reflect on the different methods employed in this research such as interviews, meetings and document collection. Finally, I discuss issues with managing the expectations of the participants.

### 8.5.1 Adopting a Broad Research Question

If I had fully adopted the 'Gioia method' or grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) then I would have narrowed my research focus during data collection, and potentially reduced the amount of data needed or targeted it more closely. The data analysis phase would also have been more parallel than sequential, thus reducing

overall elapsed time. This might have been more efficient, and I might have gathered richer data around a more focussed area. However, having a broad understanding of the likely theoretical perspectives, such as sensemaking, and asking open questions such as, 'what has happened since we last spoke?' raised issues, such as identity, in a very natural and unprompted way. An advantage of remaining open to emerging themes throughout the process was that there was less risk of asking leading questions, seeing what I wanted to see, or missing things because they were no longer within my scope. For example, initially I had very little interest in the role of meetings and it was some months before their relevance and importance became clear. However, the sequential nature of my approach also meant that when data collection was complete, there was still a great deal of analysis work to do, and it was not entirely clear where I was going. For some people this would be reason enough to adopt a more focussed approach.

### 8.5.2 Data Collection Methods

*Meetings:* The main advantage of the FMG meetings was that the Dean used them to gain a regular overview of the whole change process and to update all the key people at the same time. Meetings were an invaluable source of understanding and, importantly, from a pragmatic perspective, took up none of the participants' time. Meetings helped me to understand the social relationships between people. It can be argued that meetings are a form of performance, with the real decision making going on elsewhere. However, in my case, people were very busy and there was little opportunity to talk with the Dean outside the meetings.

*Interviews:* The main advantage with interviews was the ability to get behind the detail of what actually happened and to capture people's thoughts and feelings about their experiences (Pettigrew 1990). However, interviews are time consuming for the participant. At the most intensive part of the change FMG were extremely busy; they had been instructed by the Dean to drop all non essential activity. I had to rely heavily on goodwill and also focus more on informal conversations in corridors or before and after meetings. Generally, however, people seemed to enjoy the interview process as a cathartic opportunity to reflect and vent.

*Documents:* A range of documents and pictures were collected. The most useful

were detailed Minutes of some of the lower level meetings that I had been unable to attend which enabled me to see the issues raised. Press stories and newsletters where the Dean articulated his vision to staff, students and the general public were also helpful. I was fortunate that I was included on the FMG meeting emails and thus sent all the pre-briefing material and Minutes. One problem I experienced was in knowing what documents were available as there was no central repository.

### 8.5.3 Managing Participant Expectations

Effectively, I was granted research access on the basis of 'goodwill'. I initially met with the Vice Chancellor of the university who, after some discussion, suggested I research the merger but there was never any requirement to report back on anything I observed. The Dean primarily agreed to take part because he felt it was something the VC very much wanted him to agree to. An advantage of this was that there was very little pressure to provide consulting or advice. However, with hindsight, a disadvantage was that it was unclear to others what my purpose was and I did not know quite how to position my research in a way that made it appear 'useful', particularly given how busy people were. When arranging interviews, I told prospective interviewees that the research was approved by the Dean and the VC and that seemed to be sufficient.

I did meet with the Dean and, on one occasion the Dean and Deputy Dean together, to feedback some high level observations. As a strategy practitioner, lecturer and researcher, I had expected to be able to provide useful insight. However, whilst curious to hear my observations, the Dean had a very clear idea of what he wanted to achieve and how he intended to achieve it. Over time though, useful or not, I became a friendly and comfortingly familiar presence within the faculty, with my notebook and my voice recorder. I was a witness to people's struggles and achievements, a reminder that what they were doing was deemed significant and worthy of study, and someone who was always keen to listen. I was not the only one who experienced a sense of loss when I completed my field research after two years and stopped attending the FMG meetings. With hindsight, I can appreciate that the high level of goodwill and sponsorship, initially from the VC and over time from the Dean, was extremely helpful. However, I would also advise others not to underestimate or undersell the fact that 'being researched' can be a positive

experience in itself, or to feel that there must always be a significant pay off, such as consulting, to justify the intrusion.

### 8.6 Directions for Future Research

Specific recommendations for future research are identified in the main chapters and summarised here. In Chapter 5, I suggest that future research might continue to explore meetings as a form of strategic episode over time (Hendry and Seidl 2003; Vaara and Whittington 2012), and I encourage a renewed focus on studies of top managers and their skills (Balogun et al. 2015; Balogun et al. 2016). For example, research might consider the ways that top managers interact with their teams during strategic change in very different contexts, such as virtual meetings in global or dispersed organisations, or other alternative vehicles for leader sensegiving in organisations that see meetings as pointless or outdated.

In Chapter 6 I encourage further studies of deliberate identity change in contexts other than a merger. For example, studies of organisations facing retrenchment or financial difficulties would help to understand how claims are substantiated when there is no investment to support material anchoring, or consider how forward looking and inspiring claims are developed in such contexts. In addition, my study is one of few that show the experiential nature of the meaning-making phase of a deliberate organisation identity change processes; future research might continue to explore this area.

Future research related to Identity Work (Chapter 7) might usefully explore internal mergers in a non university setting, such as commercial organisations, particularly where it involves one group taking on the work practices of another. Another interesting aspect of my research is the similarity with Pratt et al. (2006) where both studies include an intensive, ‘boot camp’ type experience, with a deliberate and imposed set of work activities which trigger identity violations but ultimately encourage learning. It would be interesting to explore similar cases where work practices that are seen as legitimate in tough professional training, such as doctors or soldiers or intensive MBA courses, are applied in non professional contexts such as universities, the public sector or commerce.

More generally, future researchers should continue to develop the SAP field through novel research and through 'progressive coherence' (Dittrich et al. 2015). My thesis particularly demonstrates the benefits of studying four key areas which would each benefit from further development. First, I respond to the call for close-up studies of what top managers actually do: their strategising activities. Second, I show the importance of studying meetings over time to establish patterns across a series of strategic episodes. Third, I focus on strategy as socially accomplished and consider both what change leaders say and do, and also the recipient response and dynamic interaction. Fourth, whilst this thesis considers both discursive and non-discursive strategising activities it is relatively unusual in doing so. Future research should continue to explore the role of non discursive practices such as work practices, material practice and space in shaping identity, the interplay of non-discursive and discursive forms of sensegiving, and how these develop as patterns over time. Finally, responding to the limitations of this study, future research might focus specifically on mergers and unpack for example, how leader sensegiving or identity issues differ between inter-organisational, corporate level mergers and internal mergers. Future research might also respond to the general call for a more critical perspective in SAP research and consider issues of power and control.

## 8.7 Implications for Personal Learning

This section considers my own learning from the process of research and advice for other researchers, particularly doctoral candidates.

### 8.7.1 Advice for other researchers

*PhD Process:* The particular approach I have taken of producing three distinct chapters has felt like doing three PhD's at times. There were benefits from a SAP perspective of exploring the context through different theoretical perspectives. However, if I had wanted the quickest route to PhD completion then this was not the route to take, albeit the finished thesis will be easier to adapt for academic journal publication than a monograph form. However, the triple cycle of starting and completing three distinct pieces of research has helped to consolidate my learning. I was able to progress with less support from my supervisor on each iteration and this increased my confidence. Things that I found particularly hard in one paper, such as the process model or contribution section, went well in others, so I was not left

feeling I was weak in any particular area. The iterative nature also helped in developing conferences papers, which enabled me to gain valuable feedback on my work. I would advise others to consider this PhD structure if they want to use the PhD process as a way to improve their analytical and writing skills, or are hoping to pursue a career as a researcher, rather than having an end goal of obtaining a PhD qualification quickly.

*Early Data Collection:* During data collection it is hard to know what events, meetings or interviews will be most relevant or worthwhile but if there is an opportunity, my advice is that it's always better to take it, especially early on. This is particularly true with a PhD where access might be revoked or cut short but there might still be enough data to complete the thesis. Before data collection, I spoke to Chahrazad Abdallah, who had conducted qualitative research in a creative industries context. She advised me to attend meetings early on because you find out a lot about what is going on but without taking up people's time. I would pass on the same advice to others, not just to attend meetings but to talk to other people with recent first-hand experience of data collection if you can, and ideally in a similar context to your own.

*Community:* Completing a part-time PhD can be a very lonely process. I was surrounded by friends and colleagues but few who were interested in my particular area of research. Given this, I would advise others to do as I have done and to find a research community. For me this has been through conference attendance where I have attended tracks which are specific to my area of research and joined social events and development workshops. This has provided much needed support, encouragement and advice.

### 8.7.2 Personal Learning about Research

I feel extremely fortunate that external factors, such as access to a research site, a supportive employer, excellent supervision, funding, and a supportive family were available to me, whilst many other people are not so fortunate. The mantra, "*you don't have to do this, you get to do this*" is stuck to my pin-board. I believe that doctoral success is built on sheer bloody-minded determination, a lot of luck and help, and a willingness to learn your way through uncertainty, critical feedback and dark moments of despair. I have also learned that I enjoy many aspects of qualitative

research. I very much enjoy being part of a research community and know that SAP is very much the sort of research that I would like to continue to develop in future.

### 8.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I focussed on the overall contribution of this thesis, whilst the more detailed contributions of the three main chapters are held in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. This thesis contributes to the field of SAP based research, through a focus on the detailed activities and every day social interactions of a range of strategy actors. In separate chapters, I contribute to research on sensemaking and sensegiving in meetings, processes of deliberate organisational identity change, and individual identity work. Together, these three papers contribute to the SAP field and substantiate its premise that valuable and novel insight can be gained from closeness over time to strategy practitioners and their strategising activities.

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# Appendix A: Meeting Data – supporting quotes

| **Establishing the playing field (Meetings - Initial Process)** | |
|---|---|
| **Creating the Rules** quotes by Dean (D:) from meetings and interviews | |
| • Maintain focus on the plan and quality delivery | • D: *so, again, another theme I think which has been in a lot of conversations with many of you is about quality and communication. And, I suppose, moving to a stage where we stop letting anything that is not of high quality leave the buildings.*<br>• D: *lastly, really, just this quality, quality, quality because, really, the argument now is not about volume, it's about quality and so on.*<br>• D: *I suppose the thing I'm most concerned about now is quality. If quality is not coming out of certain areas then that is very problematic. So we have all of these issues but what we should focus on is Quality. Quality, quality, quality, quality.* |
| • No dark corners | • D: *[Minute taker] has very kindly put together a file which has all of the templates for the last year and a bit, and the minutes which you can look at in terms of a single subject area and trace it all the way through and you can trace it through in terms of minutes, and it's an incredibly useful document because you see the evolution of issues coming and going and it forms a very simple and complete record of the balance of transactions.*<br>• D: *so crudely, those meetings in some form need to take place next week, and the minutes need to be with us so that the FMG that takes place the week after is functional*<br>• D: *so we will be in the future having the minutes tabled from your subgroup meetings* |
| • Provide structure yet allow autonomy | • D: *it's going to be very, very easy...for there to be multiple lobbying coming directly from courses or staff or research areas or whatever. And the discipline now will be to say "no, go back to your Head of School... I'm interested in what you're saying, but ... Head of School will bring it to me". Otherwise the schools don't have autonomy, they don't have any control, having been a Head of School I know exactly how unpleasant that is*<br>• D: *if you read the JD it talks about qualifications in accountancy or... it does not talk about academic qualifications so that is a business manager in the true sense. So, they will not be interfering in academic autonomy of the schools either*<br>• D: *otherwise all of this rhetoric about Heads of School having more control and autonomy and responsibility is just going to be nothing, it's just going to be rhetoric* |
| **Shaping the Team** | |
| • Designing the FMG team structure | • D: *well, I don't know really where it comes from. I've certainly never read a management book. I did a very similar thing... I introduced exactly the same system there [as chair of an external Architecture committee] because there was the same problem when I took over.*<br>• D: *I mean, it's a standard system but since I've been in this role I have found myself increasingly talking to the heads of schools...Because that's where we can make things happen quickly. So, that's what this system is about* |
| • Choosing people with Vision | • D: *I mean, each of the heads of school has to make a sort of strategic vote on the vision and I don't think they've been invited to do that up until now, it hasn't been expected of them. You know,* |

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| | *they've just been expected just to keep, manage things.*<br>• D: *I think it's absolutely possible that the heads of school will come forward with amazing visions and if we buy into that and if the students buy into it and the other staff buy into it I will just expect them to do it very quickly.*<br>• D: *ideally, although it might take a little bit of time I want there to be a buzz in six months time or a year's time that so and so is now leading this area or that so and so has been leading this area and are now making these changes.* |
| • Choosing people who can show autonomy & collegiality | • D: *the heads of school will be working, all of us together, in a sort of environment. So, they are not going to disappear off. ... So, there are going to be all sorts of checks and balances and I want schools to be autonomous... but I do not want them to become isolated*<br>• D: *and, effectively, what has happened up until now is the sort of associate deans have effectively operated in such a way that responsibility has been removed within the schools and they've become rather sort of needy and – what's the word – neutered and what I'm wanting the heads of school to do is to exactly... I mean, my guidance to them will be to do exactly the same within their schools in relation to their course leaders. I want their course leaders to have much more autonomy* |
| **Managing the Playing Field** | |
| **Meeting Content** | |
| **Sense-Managing** - shapes internal structure of meeting in either detecting or driving form – provides opportunities for sensegiving through, for example, careful chairing. Quotes are from meetings unless otherwise stated and from either Dean (D:) or a member of the Faculty Management Group (FMG:) | |
| • Adding exceptional meeting | • D (email): There will be a Special FMG this Wednesday (29th August 2012) to discuss [university issue].<br>• D (email): Please be aware that the next FMG will be an exceptional FMG which will take place on Wednesday 28th 2013 at 2.00 in [faculty] Meeting Room. This should not impact on SMGs which are due to take place earlier that day. |
| • Inviting FMG to discuss exceptional item at end of meeting e.g. five issues for next year | • D: *and then I want to do something slightly different. I want each of you just to share with us all so we're looking forward as opposed to backwards and the five key points that you think are the most significant ones for the year ahead. So we have a conversation about that for about forty minutes or so...*<br>• D: *shall we… we've finished the area reports now, shall we break for three or four minutes because we've now got a conversation and presentation around [Faculty sub brand] and I'll just say something ... so you can think about that.*<br>• D: *I think we're finished. You've got to now go over to [see progress on building refurbishment] and put a hat on and wellington boots and (laughter) look a complete Charlie for half an hour and I'll take photographs (laughter) so if we meet at 4. FMG: our away day then?! D: It's our away day!...FMG: do you want everybody? D: yes, I want everyone to go* |
| • Changing focus of area reporting | • D: *well obviously we have two big chunks of business, one of which is the day to daily and fortnightly reporting through the reports...a different type of FMG which is this one where the portfolios of the Associate Deans primarily become the main part of the agenda...we have cross faculty roles*<br>• D: *reports based FMGs which effectively deal with issues as they* |

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| | *come up and they are typically led by the Associate Deans who have the quality remit or research remit of their faculty. So unfortunately you're in the reporting one*<br>• D: *we have two different types of FMG. We have this one which is the ponderous one where everybody reports. Then we have a different type of FMG which is [more] subject based* |
| • Adding exceptional presentations from Dean, other FMG members or invited speakers | • D: *[consultant] is here and we've been having a conversation for six months or so now... And there's a possibility of team coaching to you. So we invited [consultant] just to say a few words about that...*<br>• D: *so I'd like to romp through to (5) which is "After Clearing" and then I'd like to do something slightly…and then we'll break for about five minutes and then I want to do something slightly different.*<br>• D: *a few announcements and then what I'd like to do is show you, I'm not going to give them but show you two presentations that were made in the last part of last year. One to the governors and then, critically, the one made just before Christmas* |
| • Inviting attendees from lower level meetings | • D: *so rather than go through the minutes at this stage and chairs announcements and so on which is what we'll normally do, I'll ask the recruitment co-ordinators to join us with [Marketing Head]*<br>• D: *the feeling was really to ask [recruitment co-ordinators] to come monthly or maybe more like 6 weekly or so depending on the time of the year. There's been a number of debates in FMG around the current system and the role of recruitment coordinators*<br>• D: *by the end of this semester... the quality reps are in place and we'll be inviting them to FMG in the same way that we invited recruitment co-ordinators, occasionally until such time as everything is really stable and clear.* |
| • Changing order of speakers | • D: *okay. Thank you. I think if we could do area reports. I think if we could work in a slightly different order … if we start with [Deputy Dean] and work our way back towards undergraduate*<br>• D: *so today's agenda, I would just like to move it around a little bit...and the order I'd like to do it in just so that we follow the sort of logic of things which is a different order from before is we start with [deputy dean] and the deputy dean report...then go into three school reports...and then ending with [Project Head].*<br>• D: *effectively it's a fortnightly cycle. So, traditionally, occasionally we start from the back and work forward, but this one starts from one end, which is [Deputy Dean], and works towards the other end.* |
| • Chasing minutes and reports for Board Pack | • D: *is there any paperwork associated with your…FMG: There should be but it seems… Maybe not. Not to worry... everyone can stop looking; I looked; I didn't find the template in here.*<br>• D: *well, those are things—I mean those are semi things that kind of come up. Thank you all for doing your templates.*<br>• FMG: *[the minutes are] towards the back. It's about two in, three in from the back* D: *can you show it to us so we can see what it looks like*? |
| • Meeting closing or curtailing conversation (keeping to time) | • D: *any questions about that? No, good. So, let's just go back to the minutes.*<br>• D: *let's discuss those at some point. Now I think that's all I have to say.*<br>• D: *let's call it to a close, unless you've got anything else. I've got another meeting in about ten minutes.*<br>• D: *let's keep going because we've got a lot to go on.* |

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| | • D: *okay speed up. Chop chop [Design Head]* |
| • Meeting coaching - how to participate | • D: *May I just, I'm being sadly bureaucratic but I'm lazy and I want this to end in right time. Let's go through the templates and then if there are issues to be raised in relation to each area let's raise them through the chair in a fairly quick way, otherwise we'll just drift off into endless conversations.*<br>• D: *can I just intervene in terms of what we do with these reports. Those things are self-evident and they're really useful and the owner is very clear, [FMG member], let's not go through every one. Highlight the ones that we really need to have this collective.*<br>• D: *let's dive in then because we're gonna just welcome to the first proper [faculty] FMG. Just a few things. I mean I had written to you regarding the sort of protocols around the relationship between FMG and the area and school meetings and that covered the cycle. It covered minutes. It covered templates...* |
| • Meeting steering, Chairing | • D: *we have about, if we run about quarter of an hour late we've got two more reports. It's [Technical Head].*<br>• D: *I think we will, let's recognise that we'll be here till five so we're going to break at half past. I know various people might come and go but it will take that period of time, I think, one way or another. So, somebody remind me to break at 3.30 and we'll have a ten minute rest.*<br>• D: *We have about seven or eight minutes before coffee and I think [Architects] are going to join us at that point just to talk through any issues...then we'll start going at 4:00 with the [curriculum] presentation. So thank you all for that. I've written down lots and lots of things, some very urgent. I might catch a couple of people around specific issues over coffee. So if I could hand over [to FMG member], do you want to lead on the collision of deadlines that we are about to face?* |
| **Sense-Building** form of sense-giving – where there is broad agreement and sensegiving is used to build on that e.g. to instil confidence, provide support, demonstrate satisfaction with the individual or empathy, or to increase the level of ambition | |
| • Acknowledging (a form of positive confirming response) | • D: *I see what you're saying*<br>• D: *point well taken*<br>• D: *I think the problem we have is that nobody in Estates wants it to happen this quickly, which is, I think, the struggle, you know, [FMG member] is having …* |
| • Apologising (connecting with FMG, showing humanity) | • D: *what information's that? Sorry, I'm not being thick*<br>• D: *sorry, I completely… I have completely lost the plot, haven't I!*<br>• D: *just to answer that question, just, sorry, to go back to this. It is … I'm lying, the [course] has risen by a significant amount, actually, by almost 300%.* |
| • Allocating resource (offering some form of additional help) | • FMG: *I have to try and devise a means of simply mapping it so I know on a weekly basis what the demands are in the various areas. And then, have a bigger picture understanding of if there are any clashes...* D: *Is there any support we can give you to make this process more accurate and speedy than it is at the moment?*<br>• D: *moving forward, you've got an awful lot on your plate... So I think every help needs to be given to you in terms of the school reps to lighten this load over this period*<br>• D: *one thing on your minutes which was "it was confirmed there was no budget for the faculty administration social event" I had to take* |

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| | *issue with that. There should be a budget for the faculty administration social event.* FMG: *That will be very well received! Thank you.* |
| • Encouraging (letting people know they are doing well) | • FMG: *if there's more of a request from Design, that's something I didn't know about so we'll need to quantify that* D: *That sounds very good [Technical Head].*<br>• D: *our saviour is about to speak [Marketing Head]. FMG: so we are going for broke with our stand using… integrated marketing campaign for the first time ever, this is exciting…*<br>• FMG: *I've done two versions of it already.* D: *Good. Good*. |
| • Energising (raising ambition and encouraging people to engage fully and positively with existing work) | • D: *the offer is that this group of people who I respect enormously are being given the opportunity under your leadership to say what they think it should be and bounce it back the other way. The chains are off, let's have some blue sky thinking about the technical area because it goes far beyond servicing the academics...We've defended the technical group against all sorts of attacks, externally, it's got new leadership, it's got a new future and that offer needs to be really, really run with...that is the offer. And I think that would be very, very fruitful.*<br>• D: *can I intervene – obviously, we sit around this table perpetually complaining about centralised systems and how they don't work. This is the mechanism by which that's going to be sorted out...So, however painful our champions feel it is we should engage with this wholeheartedly and very, very professionally, such that it actually works because if it doesn't work any shortfall will have to come back to academic areas. So there!*<br>• D: *okay. I mean we are broadly on track I think. We all know that there is a sort of quiet period for three or four weeks now, that those deadlines come within that and really we want to try and resolve as much of this as possible really before clearing starts* |
| • Reassuring (allaying fears to increase confidence) | • D: *I wouldn't worry about that this year, I really wouldn't. I think that's the least thing to worry about. FMG: It's all gone slightly down by list but it was raised before this announcement was made.* D: *It's always raised.*<br>• D: *I had the same reaction that you had when [FMG member] said this but then she showed me the modules and the degree of change is tiny*<br>• D: *so, we're exactly where we've always been in terms of getting the budget...So, it's very familiar territory* |
| • Heroing (showing ability to provide support / champion FMG with the rest of the university) | • FMG: *so when will we have sight of the finer details of this [from the Vice Chancellor]…*D: *I'll pester for that. I'll pester for that*<br>• D (taking FMG through a presentation he made to the Governors): *so, this is the governors' presentation. This was made to the governors actually on the day in which they approved the nine point plans...The governors liked that. That was important...*<br>• D: *then, my really boring attempt, every time anybody will listen to me to convince everybody [at executive level] we can build three storeys on top of [Art & Design building].* |
| • Agreeing (often using similar words) | • D: *it's your time and your staff's time that you put against the project in the same way as any other cost …and I think you're absolutely right. That's the real priority*.<br>• FMG: *ah, that's something of a given*. D: *Yes, absolutely given*<br>• FMG: *I think it started with illustrations* D: *It did, it was Illustration* |

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| • Inviting and Involving (helping someone speak about something that is important to them) | • D: *[FMG member], is that something you were concerned about wasn't it?*<br>• D: *so can we confirm that everybody is happy with the sort of weekly cycle. I know you had a point [FMG member]*<br>• D: *the only last thing on the agenda was just whether there is anything more you need to say, [FMG member] about that document that was circulated in relation to the HPL timescale?* |
| • Requesting ideas (connecting with FMG – demonstrating value for their opinions) | • D: *that's my view. You're in the next couple of weeks going to share you view with me as to what you think and I'll listen to that very carefully*<br>• D: *that is a big decision and I need you to form a view on that now. And then obviously my role is to try and implement that view with the university … I don't want to impose that*<br>• D: *what is your recommendation on these two issues, without interview and reducing the period between interviews? I think the second is a no brainer but what about the first one?* |
| • Humour (external focus or FMG focus positive - connecting with FMG) | External focus<br>• FMG (describing impact of REF, Research Excellence Framework, change on another highly regarded Architecture faculty): *The framework of the units has changed; it's been halved, essentially, so what used to be Architecture and Planning is now Architecture, Planning and the Built Environment...So at the [prestigious Architecture school], for example, Planning and Architecture will have to sleep in the same bed for this exercise.* D: *Not for the first time* (laughter)<br>• D: *certainly [VC] seemed a lot less worried about it than he was a few days ago but he is going off on a cruise for two weeks. So maybe he is less worried for that reason* (laughter)<br>• D (shows comic disregard for students from another faculty): FMG: *Yes, and they did leave students on the street in the rain. D: These are business students aren't they? FMG: No, they are our students as well that were getting wet* (laughter)<br>FMG focus (positive)<br>• D: *[FMG member], you have time to plug the launch of your book* (laughter)<br>• FMG: *It's just the FD part of that is entirely new and obviously everybody will leave* D: *It was [Deputy Dean's] fault. He thought of it at lunchtime* (laughter) |
| **Sense-Directing** form of sense-giving – neither in agreement or disagreement with FMG but providing new information and explaining it; attempting to shape how the new information is interpreted by FMG or attempting to shape what information is seen as important; shaping attention and focus; attempting to unpack issues that arise and translate them into a set of actions | |
| • Criticising (shaping FMG's understanding and impressions of teams outside the faculty negatively) | • D: *I think for us I think really what we're seeing is the continuing weakness of record keeping in the university ....So nobody is more expert about how crap some of these areas are than we are*<br>• D: *bloody useless [IT support]; bloody useless marketing, lots of arguments but after lots of threats I've got a meeting tomorrow without [faculty Marketing Head] or without anybody who knows what they are talking about.*<br>• D: *I think after our recent exchange with [IT support] over the website, we can expect even less support than we've had previously* |
| • Warning | • D: *if the level of students is lower, even if you're talking about two or* |

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| (shaping understanding of threats from outside the faculty) | *three students, you've gone from three students at this point last year to no students at this point this year, I think, there will a strong pressure to close the course*<br>• D: *there needs to be a head of school or deputy involved throughout that process in relation to each area and I don't know whether that's the case. The amount of pressure that will come on us through that process is very, very significant*<br>• D: *FMG member: So, [numbers provided by university centre] are spookily accurate in terms of spread. Dean: I don't trust them* |
| • Deciding (shaping the way forward by taking a stand or decision on something) | • D: *that's the one I forwarded you. I took an executive decision and upped them very slightly...*<br>• D: *so that's where we stand on that*<br>• D: *okay. Let's find out how much it costs and discover we can't do it*<br>• *FMG: that would be great. We could nominate somebody. It would be a really very good idea I think, specialist knowledge. Because it's just another layer. D: [Technical Head] is this something that is sitting firmly in your area, I think? Have you got the capacity to pull this together?* |
| • Focusing (directing FMG's thinking by making something the centre of their attention) | • D: *so, we've still got a few shows and some prizes and so on going on but obviously the main emphasis now is that very brutal period up until the end of the month around setting up budgets and agreeing delivery and business planning.*<br>• D: *I was sitting in on Executive Group this morning. Obviously, a lot of concentration is on the [change] coming in a couple of weeks' time but also just on the fact that everybody's minds have now turned, as I can see, towards the [change]... so that's not to be underestimated.*<br>• D: *to highlight a couple of things we just … it would be good if people pick up in their reports, one of which is just the ERDF funding.* |
| • Explaining (shaping FMG understanding of new and often complex information that has often come from outside the faculty) | • D: *fairly soon the bottom line is going to drop out of the methodologies and that means we have x amount of income and x amount of money and that amount and that income will be attributed to studio students and those students will be attributed to schools and courses. Staff will be attributed to schools and courses in May and the books have to balance. Crudely.*<br>• D: *what will happen is that the RAM [Resource Allocation Model] will run on the targets... we'll get an in-year adjustment probably around about November, December, where the budget will be altered again. So that's the standard process.*<br>• D: *the algorithm for conversion rates. And we've, the deans, have said we're going to ignore the entire process until we are comfortable with the conversion rates. And that has to… a conversion rate is not only per course, it's a function of time during clearing. That's the real killer.* |
| • Informing (similar to explaining but for something less complex) | • D: *but can I fill you in as to where we are because it is clear and it came clear in the last sort of three or four days as to exactly what we're doing in this first phase. And it's good news and bad news. I just want to remind you because I think everybody has forgotten that the savings that we have undertaken to make and the reason that we have kept the redundancies low is that we are committed to making a further saving this [year]*<br>• D: *the only thing that is certain is that there will be targets for each course and each faculty. Any over shoot will be charged to faculty* |

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| | *and any over spend will be charged.*<br>• D: *that's what we're trying to get because, very soon, once the historic fog has lifted you will have, each of you, cost centres will have a budget under most of these titles that you are totally in control of. Then, this will be your problem …* |
| • Generating Actions (directing FMG to do something by assigning an action point) | • D: *put an action point there.*<br>• D: *that might be an action point*. FMG: *Ok. I'll action that, if you like*<br>D: *Thank you*<br>• D: *shall we put the action point on that then?*<br>• D: *can I just say can we minute and formally do this [Deputy Dean]…*<br>• D: *let's put it on the agenda to discuss it, come to one of the meetings and talk about it* |
| • Tasking (directing FMG to do something and being quite specific about what should be done e.g. produce a paper) | • D: *can you do a tiny briefing page on that, what you understand to be the situation?*<br>• D: *this is so crucial, could we actually, [Marketing Head], this needs to be bottomed out by the end of this week, could you just have a six or three or four bullet points as to what it is we're proposing*<br>• D: *could you leave the meeting and ask the question before we come back to you, so we can crack this one today? Can you see, talk to your colleagues and just see how quickly they can get...* |
| • Untangling (guided unpacking of a complex issue so it can be progressed) | • D: *I'm really sorry, I've looked at this about eight times and I don't understand it. Say it again in words of one syllable what these columns mean.*<br>• D: *it does sound as if when you meet [IT Head] in two weeks' time you'll have a series of questions to ask him.*<br>• D: *I'm sure these are all factors. What we're trying to isolate out of this is any endemic problems with the system and also any real [issues] in terms of staff ... I don't quite believe after all this that actually there aren't any problem areas with staff not doing it; is that really the case?* |
| • Synthesising (similar to untangling but specifically about recapping an issue in a simpler way) | • D: *let's be clear. There are two different ends to this telescope. Presumably the mechanism for that is not really for [Project Head] to propose it; it's for you to commission. I think it's really useful, to be clear.*<br>• D: *let's just not go round in circles. The people delivering the module need to know what minor changes have been made. I think in most cases, it is simply adding a word in relation to ARB's [Architects Registration Board] requirements to simply reflect what you already do*<br>• D: *what this hints at...presumably what it does do is to answer the question [Design Head] has always been asking, what is the sequence by which the audits are done, the timescales and mechanisms for reporting? I think now that you know that you need to be able to tell us how you are going to feed in a structured and auditable way*<br>Untangling and synthesising<br>• D: *can we just cut through this a sec because otherwise there are several things getting sort of tangled up here... We have two time lines that we have to control and define, one of which is the communication to students. And the other is communication to staff ... Now, I know it's complicated here because of this one module ...* |

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| | *But, what we do need to do is for next FMG there needs to be an absolute, defined plan of action...* |
| **Sense-Challenging** form of sense-giving where the change leader is not in broad agreement with an FMG member; an attempt to re-direct their thinking in a different direction; to interrogate or criticise their current thinking; to change their mind or do something differently than they were possibly planning to | |
| • Criticising / criticising softly (suggesting to someone that their way of thinking is wrong – a rebuke rather than just a difference of opinion on a specific point) | • FMG: I *sat in the meeting and they were "so where is your transition plan? Where is your model catalogue?" I do not get these emails so*…D: *But why, if you are undergraduate academic leader why are you not plugged into that?* FMG: *I don't know... it's so unorganised it's*…D: *I'm afraid it's very, very organised... Nobody is getting at you, [first name used], it's just… basically make sure you are fully in the loop...[Architecture] is appearing at the bottom of all these response charts, lowest NSS response, lowest response in relation to this and it's just not good... Anyway, what I'm trying to say is you've got to not only worry about what's happening but worry about how it's communicated and portrayed because it's a very sort of aggressive atmosphere in relation to things like the NSS [National Student Survey]*<br>• FMG: *[deputy head] said to me after the meeting with studios, they don't want external critics they want this to be a student focused workshop... they didn't want anyone because the feeling was that they all feel slightly under the cosh and* …D: *That's the whole bloody point of Celebration Week*<br>• FMG: *what I'm saying is that people won't have read the Minutes.* D: *They damn well should. Surely [uses their name] if they get them on a Monday.*<br>Criticising softly (very similar but milder)<br>• FMG: *We are. I'm just bringing it up that there is a problem* D: *I look forward to the solution, not the problem.* FMG: *I'm sure you do.*<br>• FMG: *It's slightly deeper than that.* D: *You don't want to start thinking like that* |
| • Humour (focussed at a member of FMG and mildly negative or critical) | • FMG (reporting on student trip): *I need advice whether an injury report needs to be filed. One of the girls has sort of cut her finger... we had their medic on site. D: very exciting, [uses their name], but it's not an FMG matter*<br>• D: *And finally, just league tables...I rather unfairly harangued Art for being bottom of the league table and by itself, but it was rather problematically it's Art and Design, which Art pointed out very quickly... and I'm just spreading the joy or the pain further to Design.* FMG (Design): *Thank you* D: *My pleasure*<br>• FMG: *It's interesting. At the meeting that we had, which a lot of estates people were invited, only I turned up with [estates manager], so therefore that is an issue.* D: *Knock me down with a feather! Ok. Brilliant.* (sarcasm at something that seems very obvious)<br>• D: *this is about implementing responsibility and control in terms of the sign off, particularly of those lines. Also, attacking Design School's Dorito budget which is very, very high! (laughter) you're the catering, you do a lot of catering?* |
| • Interrogating (probing due to a concern that something is | • D: *where are we with that [uses person's name]?* FMG: *We haven't advanced, I haven't had a chance.*<br>• D: *have you had that?* FMG: *No* D: *That's quite important*<br>• D: *short courses, that's on track is it?* FMG: under way, yes |

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| not going to plan) | |
| • Countering (responding where the Dean thinks someone is off track, advising them how to think about it differently) | • FMG: *all I was saying, [Dean], is that the disciplinary word has been used a lot within [Art & Design] and so it's lost some of its pregnancy.* D: *I think it can be used in such a way that it is a—what's the word—concerned friend saying that disciplinary action because it can't be used in a threatening way.*<br>• FMG: *this text will be the same as...pretty much on the website.* D: *I don't think so. I think it has to be more far-ranging than that...*<br>• FMG: b*ut, I mean, they haven't had that engagement, have they, to be able to have those conversations about how they fit in?* D: *No, no, but that's what I'm saying, that's under your leadership, let's do that.* |
| • Ordering, encouraging (responding where the Dean thinks someone is off track, with specific direction on what to do differently) | • FMG: *I mean I know I've worked through grants before, but basically...* D: *I'm trying to make a very specific point that there isn't a sort of magic—this is a dynamic process and it needs to start*<br>• FMG: *in one context it was kind of how do you name the group, if you like; in how you name the group what we really…they're not technicians, they are crafts people who just happen to work in an academic institution...* D: *But all I'm saying all over again is ... What is it that this section of colleagues want from this situation? What do they want to be known as?... So, please, go back to them and say what do they want to do?*<br>• FMG: *this is largely about the [exhibition] gallery for the period which…*D: *The Events Group is not functioning yet and I think you need to take that by the scruff of the neck because it's not just about having events it's about having a coherent set of events.* |
| • Persuading (redirecting people to alter their approach to something – recognising that it might not be their preferred way and arguing the case) | • D: *Again, all of these things, marketing and all of that has to go through [Marketing Head] in the end in terms of just knowing about it so that it's a unified picture the whole time. We mustn't all go off in different directions.*<br>• D: y*ou need to draw a line [FMG member]. You've been incredibly helpful and supportive in a sort of ad hoc way and that's been fantastic and you've done exactly what I wanted it to do. There just needs to be a moment now where none of that exists anymore and it goes through projects in a very precise way.*<br>• D: *I am of the view that in the course, during the course of next year whilst we are understanding the stage 2 funding ...we have a perfectly good, fully functioning completely equipped state of the art woodworking workshop downstairs which is better than the one in [other Art & Design building]. Therefore my view is that we have to use it* |
| • Persuading advising (similar to persuading but general rather than specific re-direction) | • FMG: *I mean I think that the main thing is about course leaders availability at the moment for this last part of this term which I think is going to be the tricky bit ...I think it might be a bit play it by ear.* D: *Well I think that's where you've got to think it through very carefully as to whether you don't want a school management group that's totally hostage to that every single time.*<br>• D: *I wouldn't jump too quickly on what is the constitution of this school management group because there are issues about representation in relation to marketing and recruitment in each school. The whole of the sub groups that will effectively relate to groups around this table so feed into what [Technical Head] is doing.*<br>• D: *Have you seen the statement on staff development within the* |

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| | *faculty that went in 2007?* FMG: *No.* D: *I think you should see that.* |
| • Warning internal (laying down a challenge to FMG to address some area or issue the Dean is worried is going off track) | • D: *we don't have a bloody website finished for clearing. There is so much aggravation going on about that. So a bit of work does need to be done. I'm worried because [Marketing Head's] away, about how it is going to be done because effectively going into clearing we have half the finished [faculty] website and we have two heritage websites and there needs to be a bit of work, quite a serious bit of work ... I'm not sure who's going to do that and how that's going to get done. It is an issue. That is an issue.*<br>• FMG: *the team I wanted was representatives from the Schools to work with the technicians with students if we hired. D: I'm not worried about your bit. You know what you're doing. You have the technicians. I'm worried about the other bit.*<br>• D: *what came out of last [time] what we already knew, the reminder of just how complicated the facilities management of moving people around within the [faculty] is going to be over this period.* |
| • Warning softly (as for warning internal but for small corrections and minor concerns) | • FMG: *It's half a day isn't it?* D: *It's a whole day so it's huge. If you tot it up it's a big chunk of HPL hours.*<br>• FMG: *No, no, no, you can't do a pilot on [History and Theory module], it's too, too big and it's not in place yet…*D: *It's going to be interesting.*<br>• D: *all I'm saying, folks, there's an [issue] both in terms of the wider faculty but generally in the university we are now very far behind or perceived as being quite far behind.* |
| **Recipient Rules** Meeting - Recipient Concepts. Quotes from interviews unless otherwise stated | |
| • High leader competence (align with the change leader because they are widely well regarded and believed to be competent) | • FMG Architecture: *I just think [the Dean] couldn't have come up with a better game plan than the one he's come up with. I think he's done a stunning job despite the blood, the gore, the mayhem.*<br>• FMG Architecture: *well, I think [he] is a far better Dean. And he is also quite an astute politician. And I think he has managed to... I mean I wouldn't say without problem but looking at the kind of slight chaos that existed I think that's a really important part of it*<br>• FMG Art: *I mean, [the Dean's] an extremely clever man and he's always testing you, always testing you*<br>• FMG Art: *I knew they always breached every [central university rule about course design] law and I was always jealous and I was always asking them "how do you manage to do it"*<br>• FMG Art: *I actually have a lot of respect for him and I think he's done some great stuff* |
| • Need to feel secure (align with the change leader because doing so is the best way to reduce high anxiety about job security) | • FMG: *So, people were surprised and excited at that point. But, still nervous about the review but then, [the Dean] had whatever, three months, four months to do his review and I think there was, certainly, nervousness.*<br>• FMG: *Absolutely and you know when [Architecture Head] and [Deputy Dean] were directly competing for the same post when there was no Deputy Dean post, you know, then anything was possible because there was one person too many.*<br>• FMG (paraphrasing from field notes): *promotion to Deputy Head of School [and FMG membership] "only provides an extra £3k per year"; "it's just not worth it", but he takes on the role because it helps to protect the smaller and "costlier disciplines" like his own specialism. If someone else was deputy then they might well decide to close his own area down.* |

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| • Need to feel respected (align with the change leader as long as you feel you have their respect) | • FMG: *[I] have no problem with supporting things and sorting things out but I think it should be in a strategic way, not in that sort of knowing damn well that by asking me to sort something out what he is asking me to do is photocopy things and put them in envelopes...*<br>• FMG: *There is a side of him that ...knows that he's just shovelling shit towards me because "we'll deal with that, we'll sort that out, don't worry. It'll all be fine." ... just come in and smile at you and be really nice and it'll somehow or other make up for all the other shit. And it doesn't…*<br>• D (FMG meeting where Dean is positive - building - but receives unusually bitter response for seeming to take credit for the faculty's success and undervaluing work of Art & Design management team): *I think from the day we [meaning Architecture] walked into [this] faculty and stopped it being closed down in a week because it was about to be closed down, furniture as an area, we sort of loved it and built it and it sort of grew.* FMG: *It wasn't only you who did that, some of us have been fighting a long fight.* D: *Yes. Well was about to be closed down you know...* |
| • Change does not involve significant negative impact on staff or students (align with the change leader as long as...) | • FMG (meeting): *but, you know, it wasn't a pleasant experience. There is a deep-seated belief that I think is being held by a broad range of staff that we're not in control of the details …*<br>• FMG (meeting): *There's still a lot of reinstatement work to do ... it's not something that I will say to the students but it's a depressing facility for me to view because all of the work that we have indicated to the students would happen has not occurred so it will be a very, very, very hard sell.*<br>• D (meeting): *No, no, no, by exposing them to an external voice [critical external review of student work in progress] ... I think one's got to get the balance between something which is getting cosier and cosier and cosier, and something which still has the ambition to be quite a shock to the system.* FMG: *the problem we had last year...like [example of a studio that for valid reasons was not as well advanced as the others and was badly criticised] the students never recovered out of that situation. And I think that is slightly unfair.* |
| **Meeting Content (Recipient Responses)** | |
| **Sense-Aligning -** showing you are on board with the Dean's change plans and making good progress in implementing them. Quotes are from the meetings unless otherwise stated | |
| • Supporting (backing up the Dean - lending support to his argument) | • D: *could I just ask one question? Could this schedule become the only schedule now? For building moves and associated…*FMG1: *What do you mean by the only schedule?* D: *Well, I'm aware that there's all sorts of documents circulated around.* FMG2: *Everything in the same place sounds like a good idea.*<br>• Architecture Head: *What [colleague] has done is… we have dropped our A levels UCAS quote between now and when the clearing starts.* D: *We can't do that.* Design Head: *That sounds yeah, they're changing the offer.*<br>• D: *I think that you've got to look at that very hard in terms of refining the administration of your School because all we're at this level asking for is you to have a school meeting and for that to be represented and for there to be a named person to liaise with the two other areas.* FMG: *I think the key for this to work though is we have our SMGs or meetings and when actions are agreed, each member whose action that is must cover in the notes so that we do* |

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| | *not wait for the Minutes.* D: *Exactly.* |
| • Praising (the Dean or other colleagues) | • D: *lastly, from my point of view the very good meeting that we had with the technicians we had with [Technical Head] where we agreed that their area would be an equal area in terms of external perception in some ways to schools...*FMG: *Oh well done!*<br>• D: *it's slightly backwards but they seem enthusiastic. FMG: I think they were. I think it's really good.*<br>• FMG: *we had the Fine Arts Committee last week...there was explicit praise for [Technical Head] and [his] team for their general assistance in making it work despite building works etc* |
| • Accepting (a compliment or praise) | • D: *anyway, that was very positive and thank you when I think they understand what you do now and that you are their boss.* FMG: *Thank you! I think it was the ring of protection around them to know that they were protected and they weren't vulnerable. That's the bit that was really important.*<br>• D: *that was stated in a very calm and measured way...Well done.* FMG: *I think yes, there are issues; temperatures do rise a little bit when you're talking about, yes, Finance.*<br>• FMG1: *the stuff that [FMG2] prepared is absolutely fantastic.* FMG2: *What's that?* FMG1: *the slides you prepared.* FMG2: *Oh, that's only NSS, though*. FMG1: *Yes. They're pretty excellent.* |
| • Celebrating (success, good news) | • FMG: *just in terms of good news [student name] was our Diploma student selected out of six for Media Class of the Year. I think there was also some interior architecture success at Free Range.*<br>• FMG: *then [lecturer] has been invited to sit on the UN Round Table...so I think that's good news*<br>• FMG: *on our lecture series...that started and we had three lectures now in Art, two in Architecture and so it's nice to see us coming together. That's nice on the website, in fact to see that.* |
| • Humour (positive – a shared joke often at the expense of someone not in the room) | Humour (positive)<br>• Design Head: *yes, I stole from [Architecture Head] as an idea*. Architecture Head: *I won't charge you for it!* Design Head: *We're disseminating good practice!* (laughter)<br>• FMG: *one of the things I've done recently is read through all the staff CVs and it's quite clear that about three quarters of them can't write*. (laughter)<br>• FMG: *yes I spoke to a lot of Illustration students. My reading of that is that partly [it's to do with] Fine Art students thinking 'what's Fine Art with a job title?'* (laughter)...*I'm really glad [Fine Art course leader] isn't here for your sake*.<br>• D: *ok, I'll stop ranting about [disciplinary] but…listening to everybody I've heard it over and over again… they haven't done this, they haven't done that...Don't then defend the situation if one says well let's do something about it.* FMG: *we are doing something about it…we're doing something just short of a disciplinary* (Dean laughs). All: *'just'* (laughter). D: *ok, on that happy note* (moves on). |
| • Progressing (demonstrating that you're making good progress) | • FMG: *Fine Art is coming [to the] studio conversation quite late, but now quite enthusiastically. We're getting rather good...and the deadline for receipt of all of the proposals tomorrow I think. So that's now on track.*<br>• FMG: *I had a meeting yesterday about this and [university contact] has come back discussing a couple of things that might work. So that's progressing positively.* |

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| | • FMG: *we've had two meetings...So, there is lots of information to assimilate but it is beginning to happen*...D: *Are you confident that you are going to be able to provide us with clarity during the course of the week beginning 23rd May...?* FMG: ... *there is a process I've started which is obviously very good, it's reasonably straightforward so at the moment I don't see complications*. |
| • Suggesting (building on an idea or discussion in a positive way e.g. pointing to additional resources or making it better) | • D: *well I'm looking at it tomorrow with the [website providers] but it's hard. We're not getting obviously for good reasons, we don't have a team working on the website at the moment.* FMG: ...*we've got [collegue] within our team who is our web designer who is wanting to contribute to improving the usability of the website, but again, if you want to use him in any way I just don't know when his leave is but I can find out*<br>• D: *when are you proposing that the Woodmill would be closed in order to fast forward more than ten screens? Can we decide what the implications are likely to be now?…FMG: I have no idea whether this is on or off message but is there any possibility of offering some overtime to staff to come in and do the Saturday? I mean, you can't oblige them … it's just a question.*<br>• FMG: ...*if we could arrange them all on the same day and broadly as I say in all cases it will give you the opportunity to have school meetings and faculty meetings whether they are mixed or central and/or social at the end of it. So we could actually make it something of an event that pulled everybody together.* |
| • seeking information (clarification in order to do what is being asked correctly) | • FMG: *I'm just slightly confused whether we are expected to do this or just have a fuller version of the notes from the Minutes*. D: *This is a document between you and FMG.* FMG: Okay. D: *the Minutes are a public record of a public meeting. This is you saying "bloody hell" I need you to think about this*. FMG: *so I won't go through the Minutes as such, just highlight some things....*<br>• D: *the start of year meetings to be set at the next FMG...* FMG: *I just asked a query whether the idea was that the school meeting happened in the AM and the faculty meeting in the PM because I'd scheduled in those dates.*<br>• D: *well obviously the principle is the same as we've just been discussing with the technicians. The Admin team is [Business Manager's] team and effectively the School administrators are working with and for the School but they are still line managed and they are your staff.* FMG: *Just on the issue of line management...can they never instruct my school administrator, that sort of thing. At what point do we work together?* |
| • Agreeing | • D: *there just needs to be a moment now where none of that exists anymore and it goes through projects in a very precise way*. FMG: *Absolutely. There's a project initiation document for running our projects for students, protocol. It has to be. They can't be random anymore.*<br>• D: *that's the whole point. The timetable needs to be dropped into the building. The galleries lie entirely outside the timetable*. FMG: *Yes.*<br>• D: *I'm dealing with that. It's quite delicate. FMG: You are dealing with that. Okay.*<br>• D: *I mean clearly one of the key mechanisms in getting the admin group supporting the schools properly ... and your school leading on that connects them directly with the faculty administrator dealing.* FMG: *I understood that yeah.* |

| **Sense-Disclosing** - sharing news, informing others, showing openness and transparency. Quotes are from the meetings unless otherwise stated | |
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| Informing (general area reporting and responding to clarification seeking questions) | • FMG: *also a number of conversations have been had with undergraduate and postgraduate studio staff in terms of changes to next year. I won't go into detail but basically we also tried to trim where we can so there are more viable staff/student ratios...*<br>• FMG : *I've been going to meetings every week ... I think there is good communication happening in estates and they are now involved in the meeting so hopefully there shouldn't be any issues*.<br>• FMG: *you've got the Minutes and then I've done a template, which I'm handing round. So the Minutes are from the meeting a week and a bit ago... The following bi-weekly will have course cluster representatives which have now been approved and so hopefully quoracy [attendance] will improve*. |
| Confirming (providing information in response to a question e.g. about whether something has been done or will be done) | • D: *good. Okay take that off. School successes?* FMG: *No I haven't done it yet but I can do it*.<br>• D: *you're talking about that tomorrow?...*FMG : *Yeah. We had our first meeting. I need to do some stuff...circulate information on all the software between areas, which is [Architecture and Art & Design] and consolidate what we have and then to build a map to where it gets used*<br>• D: *what's your sort of timeline on that do you think?* FMG:... *so my concern is to make sure there is adequate provision for architecture students [Art & Design building] so that could be as simple as just once those rooms are ready just putting in [teaching equipment] ... So it can happen very quickly.* |
| Issue raising (alerting to problems in own area or under own remit – factual rather than trying to counter the Dean) | • FMG: *and the final thing...[we] went to student recruitment group where they presented how the university's recruitment for next year [would look]. I think we need to do some more local flavours related to this because they are using the...you know, predictable university brand. I mean, there's nothing we can do, we're part of the university and we're included in that but I think we have to do something on top of that*.<br>• FMG: *there is seemingly one new issue that has arisen...so it seems as if what's happened is that students were pulled off the module so all their previous data is withdrawn and then they're reinstated on the module and then it's blank... We're following up with [university central team] but we don't really know why that is happening to such a large extent*.<br>• FMG: *I think there is this ongoing issue and it's one of those that you need to, maybe it comes under …teaching and learning, maybe, the issue of how we actually manage archive in terms of retention of student work and how ... we can actually build up a proper digital archive of student [work] which we can then edit and ...retain the 10% we really want as a kind of permanent archive.* |
| **Sense Counter-Challenging** disagreeing with the change leader, defending own or colleague's position. Quotes are from the meetings unless otherwise stated | |
| • Shielding (coming to the defence of a colleague who is being challenged) | • FMG1 (argues she doesn't have important data because the team concerned are disorganised and not sending it to her): *no, it's so unorganised it's*…D: *I'm afraid it's very, very organised*...FMG1: ...*for example, the other thing was...So, I again wasn't in there. So I emailed*… FMG2: *it's very difficult to fulfil these things, when one's not aware of them*.<br>• D: *I just want to be very clear here because that is not the practice in* |

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| | *architecture and it is not the practice in fine art.* Design Head: *It is a practice in design. It's probably a practice in media as well...I'm suggesting it does take place but at a school level. The faculty student forums were deeply ineffectual*. Deputy Design Head: *worse they actually made students angrier. There were sometimes scheduled at 9 o'clock in the morning and that sort of thing.…* |
| • Countering (general - just with 'no' or short response, a comeback) | • FMG: *what I'm saying is that people won't have read the Minutes.* D: *They damn well should. Surely [FMG member's name] if they get them on a Monday.* FMG: *They don't though. They won't.*<br>• D: *yeah it doesn't work like that. You've got to have the money.* FMG: *I know it doesn't.*<br>• D: *I suppose if I'm being honest, I haven't … I'm not certain whether we, in the context of that larger developmental thing ... the timing of when we bring about this big shift* …FMG: *This isn't a big shift; this is a relatively small shift*. |
| • Humour (negative – responding to Dean or other FMG member in a way that shows a lack of support for, or confidence in, what they are saying) | • D: I *just want this because you can't progress until you have those at all and that's now problematic...* FMG: *Well, I modelled it. I've got it all. I've got the full fat version. I've got the skinny version. I've got the super skinny version. What I'm trying to work out is which of those is going to be feasible.* (sarcasm)<br>• FMG1: *...[Estates] would like advance warning before anything...requests across a whole faculty or a School or several faculties it's easier for them to do. They'd rather do that.* FMG 2: *would you like me to assemble a diatribe of snagging issues that have been ongoing for two years that we've been waiting to resolve?* (sarcasm)<br>• FMG1: *I have been monitoring the work of the building work ...So, for example, today there would have been cutting a slab of concrete from the fourth floor.* FMG 2: *We were under it! (laughter).* FMG1: *Testing noise levels to decide in fact whether it's uncomfortable during the day and whether they ought to start earlier.* FMG2: *the worst thing is they cut off our water...(no longer joking)*<br>• FMG1: *..you'll get more chairs.* D: *When?* FMG2: *Mañana, mañana, mañana*. |
| • Persuading (reasoned complaining, trying to get the Dean / FMG to do something differently - countering with facts or a reasoned line of argument) | • FMG: *if I can just say that if everybody can help to use people that are designated for particular tasks because at the moment I'm having to do everything and also mentor them and task them and update them. So, anything that can go direct to that person and then if that person isn't then back to me. It will help because I'm just drowning*.<br>• FMG: *so, can we identify someone other than [Marketing Head], I'm not volunteering in any shape or form, to be our normal coordinator of the ... meetings in the summer show. And there are not very many weeks. My view is that it shouldn't be any of us because we are involved in all this other stuff which might mean that we attend but we don't lead it.*<br>• FMG*: but you know, basically we are a faculty in transition. We haven't fully merged, every time I go into a meeting there are still people that are in deep denial that anything has changed for them on the ground. It is these signature moments that make people understand that we have changed and actually, yes, if they have been involved in the undergraduate summer show then they should already know how to do it, but there are a body of staff who haven't been involved in the undergraduate summer show. They should* |

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| | *have been but they haven't. You know so these are potentially a different group of people [who therefore need more support than the Dean is currently offering].* |
| • Warning (arguing the need to do something differently than the Dean proposes by expressing alarm, scepticism, misgivings) | • FMG: if not we can wave goodbye to overseas students for at least a semester.<br>• FMG: *can I just say that... sharing across FDs [foundation degrees] if you've got small cohort numbers of fed entry it's going to be difficult. I'm not saying it's impossible but it's going to be a challenge to do that.*<br>• FMG: *can I just speak [for] some of the Academics that are based in the factory because I think there is also this concern ... you know that the brainy stuff happens in one place and my euphemism, the grunts, might happen somewhere else...I think it is a concern isn't it that I have heard from various staff...*<br>• FMG: *...a great deal of unhappiness about facilities and provisions, projectors and furniture... what staff are saying is that they feel that these things affect students' experience. .. Obviously when we fix it, they'll be happier but the sooner we do, the better.* |
| **Sense-Limiting** - reduces opportunity for sense-giving e.g. being absent or not providing information before the meeting or not attending, may be intentional or unintentional | |
| • leaving meeting early, non attendance, templates missing, changing subject | • FMG (interview): *I missed a lot of FMGs because of interviews which was interesting or came late to them, whatever and I didn't miss much (laughing). If something was really urgent, I'd always hear about it, some phone call or text from [the Dean or Deputy Dean]... it's important to meet as a faculty, given all the years we were as a department without these meetings. It's a good thing*.<br>• FMG (interview): *I've had a problem in that I find myself teaching on Wednesday afternoons, last year and this year so I missed a lot of meetings, that's not been helpful, unfortunately, that kind of problem, yes*.<br>• FMG (meeting): Deputy Design Head's phone rings (laughter). Art Head: *put it on silent* (laughter) Deputy Design Head*: well it's [Design Head] contributing to the meeting...*Art Head: *she's chosen not to come.* Deputy Dean: *Dear [Design Head], you're not here, go away*' (laughter) |
| **Mavericking (Driving Meetings – solo)** Driving meetings tend to contain less challenging by the Dean and a more positive tone; where counter-challenging occurs it tends to be in response to sense-building or directing and to be one person with an issue rather than many dissenting voices | |
| Mavericking examples (solo counter-challenging by one person – in contrast with the overall more positive tone of the driving meeting) | • D: *we have to generate more interest, we have to generate more students, we have to generate more CPD and short courses and so on. And so I find it very hard not to have the instinct that if we have the [new brand] as a separate entity part of the [faculty brand] that we wouldn't see an enormous jump in the amount of interest in that area.* FMG: *Well I think it's too dangerous to do that one discipline which is a relatively small if high quality, you know, provision that we've got because then what will happen is all the others will then say what about us? D: Well they might be right. I think that's the question we've got to get to grips with.* FMG: *but they can't reinvent the mix*. D: *But that's the only industry we have.*<br>• D (challenging a proposed date for a future event): *I think it's just got to be tight. I think it's got be pushed hard and fast … that's too late…*FMG: *there aren't that many weeks before then, that's one of the reasons...so that only leaves one week when you come back* |

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| | *and teaching starts 9th January.* D: *I mean, I know it sounds, everything sounds tight but compared to some things we're trying to do on tighter time scales …*FMG: *It's not an inability to do them, as you well know [Dean] it is giving people notice so that it is a success and people are even trying to be there …*D: *well then you've got to be second semester… but we're getting things in dates when they just won't work.* FMG: *which is why I'm sharing with people here because I'm not involved in teaching.* |
| **Wrangling (Detecting Meetings – group)** Detecting meetings tend to contain more challenging by the Dean and interrogation. Where counter-challenging occurs it is more likely to be in response to sense-challenging by the Dean and this can provoke a more assertive response by FMG (like is met with like). It is more likely to include a number of dissenting voices. | |
| Wrangling examples<br><br>(counter-challenging which involves multiple FMG members supporting each other in challenging the Dean) | • D: *what are the implications of not having an MA show?* Design Head: *It's non-negotiable. It would cause complete chaos with student experience. There are students who have been told that this is the key part of their offer. We cannot cancel the show.* D: *Well, let's see.* Design Head: *We can't. We can't. We can't.* Deputy Dean: *It's part of the final assessment as well.* Dean: *For what areas?* Design Head: *For MA Design, for MA Fine Art...*Architecture Head: *Even more so, this is part of the students' learning experience and part of assessment.*<br>• D: *there was the issue over appraisals...the deadline is the end of July*… Fine Art Head: *so this month as a head of school without a deputy, and everybody else has the same thing, we've got to complete the PG review documentation. There's significant HR processes for school of art that need to be dealt with very urgently. Module revisions, subject development, and planning sessions... somehow this has got to get slotted in.* Head Architecture: *I would like to echo this and ...there's the point where faculty has to go back to university to say this cannot be achieved all in the timeline you're giving...I just think that if you don't at some point say, "This can't happen," we're all gonna get ill.* Head Design: *Well, we already have. We're already in that process.* Dean: *Yeah, I mean it's a difficult one, isn't it? I mean that is the reality.... if one looks at what is negotiable—some [deadlines] are more negotiable than others—but you simply end up…* |
| **Meetings Process - Before and after Meetings** | |
| **Sense-Monitoring -** determining the nature of next meeting - driving or detecting. Sense-monitoring refers to activities which inform the next meeting such as reflecting on the previous meeting, reading the Minutes of other meetings or gathering new information which then informs the nature of the next meeting. This takes place outside the FMG meeting but is documented here by quotes from the Dean from within the meetings which evidence his activities outside the meeting | |
| • Reflecting on previous FMG meeting reactions and Rules (going through the minutes before the meeting) | • D: *I'm noticing in various of the minutes, as well, that there is a growing sort of concern or sort of mea culpa but actually sometimes [we] haven't been told that the courses have changed, they're seeing that in Fine Art.*<br>• D: *Just a couple of things I picked up from Architecture's minutes. [FMG member] reported a meeting with [colleague] regarding additional computer based training programmes for CPD and short courses. [Project Head and Technical Head], this is all joined up, is this?*<br>• D: *Then I do note again we were raising attendance at meetings and* |

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| | *so on and I notice it's rumbling through all of the [school level] Minutes, but it's still not perfect* |
| • Gathering new information internal to faculty e.g. ad-hoc and formal meetings, one-to-ones | • D: *Lastly, from my point of view the very good meeting that we had with the technicians....where we agreed that their area would be an equal area in terms of external perception in some ways to schools...*<br>• D: *Thank you. [Fine Art Head] would you also, I forgot I was going to announce it but I forgot, just reflect upon our meeting with the [Art Gallery]*<br>• D: *If I circulate this confidential document we can talk about it in a minute...So just in relation to this document. This is what [Deputy Dean, Business Manager] and I were spending a lot of time doing into the wee small hours earlier in the week* |
| • Gathering new information internal to University e.g. executive meetings | • D: *The VC harangued me again today because his biggest worry of course for us is these recruitment figures – 30% reduction. Of course what's being signalled is...*<br>• D: *More information came out at SMG today. It seems to be in three areas. Record keeping...attendance monitoring; and following up on English language requirements.*<br>• D: *I was sitting in on Executive Group this morning. Obviously, a lot of concentration is on the [major change] coming in a couple of weeks' time but also just on the fact that everybody's minds have now turned... so that's not to be underestimated* |
| • Gathering new information external e.g. partnership meetings, trade press | • D: *I listened to [famous external Art Gallery], I listened to [the Gallery Director] going saying public to 200 people that ceramics everybody she spoke to wants to get involved in ceramics and really and people aren't doing ceramics anymore... but if everybody has closed their ceramics course I might prefer to see that as an opportunity.*<br>• D: *overarching cut in the education sector comes out of today's announcement ...what we're talking about is a cut to the ability of the government to fund student loans. ... And of course there's a lot of stuff in the press about universities and risks of closure and merger and so on. A figure of up to 27 universities has been bandied about. So the university position is...*<br>• D: *There's a lot of things to talk about. I mean, I will at some point report on everything that went on in Brussels because there's an awful lot of very interesting opportunities....* |

# Appendix B: Identity Work data - sample narrative

This is an example of an initial narrative I wrote based primarily on interview data but also from observation in meetings and at other events and from informal conversation. In the narrative I mainly use verbatim, or near verbatim, text and I use the first person, 'I'. In a small number of cases I retell something I heard or observed rather than a direct quote and in this case I use his name i.e. 'John said' (pseudonym). Other names that identify people or the university have been replaced by alternatives such as job titles – this is shown by [square brackets]. For the faculty name I have used the pseudonym 'The Nash'.

***Background – before the merger period***

My background, very briefly, is a bit varied. My degree is History of Fine Art. I then wanted to live in Japan, so I got a teaching qualification. I lived there for ten years, teaching English and studying Japanese culture in general, which is very important for everything I've done since. I was very interested in some of the peer - cultural aspects and that kind of thing; the ethics practice. I came back to Britain when I was in my early 30s and retrained as a cabinet maker; obviously interested in craft and design. Then did that for about 10 years, my own practice and working for somebody else, at which point I had got bored of making somebody else's designs, always with very little creative input. But because I'd just had a child I couldn't afford to take the risk of starting my own company. Not the financial risk, that would have been okay, but the risk of really uncontrolled workloads. Because in that field, sometimes, you haven't got much and then you work 16 hour days for two weeks at a time. I saw how my boss went through it with small children, when he was building his business and wasn't able to delegate, because he needed to be there all the time. So I didn't want to do that. I was looking for something else and found this. Not the job I do now by any means, but a job here which was specifically teaching furniture design and crafts in what I knew was once the [original college name], although it wasn't called that by the time I joined. When I was a student in my 20s it was very prestigious and very glamorous. A very, very renowned institution. It was probably kind of fading even then, but it had still got a reputation.

I joined in 2002, what specifically tempted me to the job, I was to teach design and craft on further education courses. So you could really, really improve students to be completely employable. You could take somebody and two years later turn out a furniture maker, because they were heavily taught. So that's very rewarding to see that. I'm a trained career and natural teacher. I'm not one of those people who's basically an academic who suffers the teaching. It's the other way round. So that was very important that the teaching was real teaching in a workshop leading people to very high standards of craft and ethics of craft. Also, it was made quite clear that I was expected to engage in practise led design in my interview, which I was very, very keen on. I'm particularly interested in marrying traditional and modern technologies, it's what I have always wanted to do; to use digital tools as appropriate but to maintain use of craft skills where they are sometimes cheaper, sometimes faster, sometimes a bit better. So that's why I took the job.

After about two years I found myself to be Course Leader and FE Coordinator and City and Guild Scheme Coordinator which enabled me to go from a Lecturer to a Senior Lecturer post. They also started sucking me out of the further education into undergraduate, because they used not to give people SLs if the bulk of their work was in the FE teaching. But I was doing a lot of undergraduate dissertation. When my workload tipped over into more than 50% of my undergraduate schemes, that's when they said, okay, you can progress.

I joined in 2002 and then I suppose I did the job I was actually recruited to do for about three years. So, when I arrived, I found the place was in a terrible state. It was a complete state of disarray. Basically all the permanent staff had left. They were running the courses which were in a horrible state of recruitment, horrible state of student success, horrible state of everything. There were two HPLs who were not trained teachers, with very, very limited skills ranges. Students were walking off the courses. I found records showing there were courses with a zero percent pass rate, quite common. It was a disaster. They hadn't written the courses. City and Guild's had put in place a new certificate called 6955 Award and it had particular requirements and they had simply not written them. They were just teaching what they always taught them and students failed all the exams. So I had to write that

course and then we started to get an increase in quality of student work, outcome, examination passes. After a year we absorbed three staff members from another college that was shutting down its furniture on a TUPE transfer (Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment) to avoid making them redundant. That was very helpful, because that then meant that because we'd taken these people with a large cash subsidy we had to make them busy. So it allowed us to expand. So because the quality was getting right and we were starting to build a reputation we grew the courses from about 30 to something like 106 full time equivalent students, which is a large course for us; even now, quite a large course. We were getting very good, pretty much 100 per cent retention and pass rates, after probably two years. Then they changed the awards again. We had to re-write and do that all over again. So, I'm starting to get quite a lot of experience of course writing and validation procedures and quality assurance and so on, which is when I started to getting moved into undergraduate. Then we had an Ofsted inspection, which we passed at the curriculum level, so the teaching was fine. That was at year zero; the foundation courses we called it then. All the City and Guilds we ran in furniture, upholstery, soft furnishing, silver-smithing and jewellery, all of these areas. But the institution failed its Ofsted report. So the institution management failed. You know the history of management here – it's been a disaster. Presently now it's on an economically sound footing but in the past it was a complete disaster. Relations were awful and they couldn't manage anything. They were super controlling but incompetent, which is a perfect recipe for disaster. When I first joined we had a very good Head of Department. She has gone on to great things since. She's now a very eminent - she was extremely good, but she was only here for about the first two years, or three maybe, that I was here. She brought in [previous Dean] to do research.

So then, with the failed Ofsted inspection (around 2005) which was a disaster. It was a real disaster and humiliating to the management to find that the staff had been performing but they'd failed. One of the reasons they failed was, historically, they had no control of their data. None of the data was worth anything at all. The inspectors were appalled. They're saying to us your pass rates are absolutely awful. Look, you've only passed 25% of your students. They showed me the class list and I was saying, look out there. You can see 16 benches, we've got 16 students. There

are 66 students on this class list. What you've got here is a load of students who applied, but never joined and they remain on this list. They're all counting as failed, apart from these 16 here who passed, who are the ones out there. They're sort of going, ah yes, but unfortunately we have to use institutional data for our report. So that's why they failed. They were completely sympathetic but they said we can't do anything at all. So they must have put something on the report that indicated that if an institution doesn't have reliable data it can't pass. No matter what, it can't pass.
So, following on from that and a couple of very high profile complaint scenarios that were not doing well, the institution decided to close all its FE. Fortunately, at that time, I think it was [the first Dean] recruited her just before she left as Head School of Design, who's still the same person today, who is one of the two or three most capable and intelligent people I've ever met. The [Design School Head] is an incredibly capable woman who sees the problems coming far in the distance and attacks them long before they hit. She saw the issue here, which is that significant redundancies were coming down the line to these FE staff unless she did something. She rounded them all through into foundation degrees and, where possible, developed them, so that they were capable - you know, found their right slots. We got out of the huge FE provision. It was enormous; really enormous. Hundreds and hundreds of students [gone] without any compulsory staff redundancies. There would have been some leavers and we'd have had lot of HPL losses, but we didn't make anyone redundant, which is a massive feather in the cap. You must bear in mind that in some cases crafts people are as clever a people as you get, because in some of these skills you can't be a highly skilled whatever and not very intelligent, because you will fail. It's a highly complex problem solving operation. Some class people like [lecturer's name], a silversmith, highly capable of teaching to PH.D. level, although she will spend all her day bashing a metal bench, if she gets the chance. Others are basically technicians, technically skilled, but not otherwise and not really doing the reflective practice thing at all.

[Design School Head] said when she was asked to [around 2005], take over the school of design and combine them with the school of production and manufacture and she said, okay, but I can't do it myself. I need help. They said, okay, we'll give you a point five deputy who will have to have a point five teaching load, but can point

five support you. So, she agreed that and then she said to me if this post is advertised will you apply for it? Maybe she said it to other people as well. So, I did, although I didn't want it, because I could see what was coming and I wanted to teach. There's only one thing that happens in these jobs. You don't have to be a genius to realise and pretty soon you're not doing anything else but shoving paper across a desk. So, I got that and it was on a temporary basis so I had to re-apply for the job every year for three to four years. Then they converted it to permanent and it was opened up again to be applied for and other people did apply for it when it became permanent. So I applied for it again and got it again. Then they converted it from its previous title which was Associate Subject Leader to a permanent principal lectureship. I had to apply for it again when they did that and I got it again. Then there were various redundancies roles which I had to apply for the job again, but everybody is going through redundancy all the time so that's not significant.

***Early Merger Period from mid 2011***

Then most recently, when the faculties joined and [the new Dean] came, he did a management restructure. So it was converted from what was called Associate Subject Leader to Deputy Head of School and I had to apply for it again and I got it again. It's distinctively up a grade. It is a move from Principal Lecturer to Academic Leader, which is more accurate, because Principal Lecturer really intends I think an academic role. The interview this time was different. In previous interviews I was so frustrated at the pointlessness of it. I knew they were going to appoint me. This time the panel was [the new Dean], the Dean of Business and Law, the Dean of Students with an HR representative, in attendance. So it was obvious that straight away that [the Dean] had clocked one thing above all else. He was absolutely spot on, which is that in the future if a course, a school, a faculty university doesn't offer quality that is visible quality, real quality that is visible and measurable, it won't survive. So, he has made it a mission to ensure that - my interpretation of what he's doing is that the benchmark underscoring the provision, of course, has to be financially viable. But how you calculate financial viability is extremely flexible. At this level, at this level, at this level you'll get cross subsidy, but if it's not quality you won't have it. He knows what quality is. He's got particular ideas about what quality is. The point about that is you need people who really understand that. That can say well that isn't good enough and that quality - some aspects of performance can be driven, but quality

has to be led, I think, by example apart from anything else. You can't drive people to quality. You can drive people to just perform, but you have to lead people. Lead them to want to do it with quality. That requires things like vision. In the past we didn't do vision, we did tasks. There wasn't anyone asking "what is the School of Design? What's it do? What's its mission?"

We teach people to make stuff and get a job, but now we are able to say - although the staff, it won't be under their skins yet, they probably won't - we know that we are a school that teaches, we hope, reflective practice-based designers, who engage with a concept that you might call design activism. That's to say design has a beneficial, we hope, impact in communities or with organisations. So that it's not art; it's not for you. It's not something that sits in a shop, looks nice, gets home, unwrapped, given as a present and stays there. It's something that has an effect. It can be an emotional effect and reward, but it doesn't have to be a tool. But it's not art. That's what I would say. Artists do art. They crumple up a sweetie wrapper, put it in a jam-jar and think it's solving the world, but we don't do that. What it is isn't important, but the fact that we know what we want our courses to do, as well as provide employability, of course, but more than that. It's about, in a way, it's about ethics. Do we want ethical designers…[the Dean] did a vision for architecture for the school, but he asked us, "what's your vision?" He's not interested in telling people what to tell back. He says things like, "we have to step up". [The Dean's] an extremely clever man and he's always testing you, always testing you. He was here for about a year, not a year, nine months. Did not much at all. Then bang, restructure when he was ready. He knew what his staff team was. He already knew who he wanted to keep and let go of, I'm quite sure. He constructed a process very carefully to allow him to make the choices that he wanted to make. Then it happened and people were confirmed in their jobs and I said to [Design School Head], all that time, when we were wondering what's he going to do he's just been watching and he's been testing; testing us in two ways. Testing us to see if we can generate things, not just do what he said. But, to generate the ideas like the vision, the mission for the school or whatever it might be; commercial ideas. He's also been testing us in workload. I have to believe that he cannot imagine people will continue with this stretch forever; that it's a particular period. Because people will start falling off the

perch if he does. But at points you have to be prepared to let other things go and step up.

***Forming of FMG (March 2012)***

What's surprisingly quite good, I think, is that there isn't the caution, or even hostility, or kind of turf war between the staffs of two faculties going on with the new faculty team management, with me, and [other FMG members] working together. We're working quite well together. People are still cautious of each other, but as people get to know each other better they realise that actually these are not nasty or dangerous people, because we have had nasty and dangerous people in the faculty in the past. They are collaborating, because everybody sees the opportunities and dangers. So that's going well. Obviously, the fact that [the Dean] now thinks that faculty is running in the black is fantastic, because we've never been. I think it should make people feel a lot more secure. The thing with - the merger, I don't think is causing us any problems. I think we're managing the merger well and I think there's loads of opportunities for us. Our students will have better opportunities. We're not fighting about it. We're not squabbling over resources.

***Early merger period 2011 to August 2012 (harmonisation year)***

What the problem is, is the workload. The workload is absolutely mental. It's really risky and it just can't go on forever, because people will become ill. Last summer was a very intense period of work, as we were re-writing the whole courses.

My school is very, very well led by [Design School Head], but the kind of style of management that couldn't happen in the private sector, where you give no consideration whatsoever to the capacity of the people you're tasking to actually do the task. You just throw it at them, until something breaks. That's not sensible surely. When I was working as a cabinet maker, if my boss gave me a six week project and told me I had three weeks to do it, that would've been crazy and you would've been told it was crazy.

There's no attempt to measure how much work you're giving to what resource. If someone said, you're a bit slower on that than I thought, can we think about this for the next time? Do you need some development? Do you need some IT training? It would be one thing, but there's actually no attempt to consider how the resource fits

the task. Just keep doing it, keep doing it. In private industry you'd be out of business if you did that. It couldn't happen because you'd miss delivery deadlines or whatever.

I strongly suspect it's something to do with the nature of the architecture building construction industry. I know perfectly well from friends who work on building sites that they have this thing of deadlines. It's really important that this thing gets finished by six o'clock on that particular morning, because the concrete mixer is coming to pour the concrete. If you send him away, you've just wasted £15,000, because you've not got the hole in the ground ready. If it's caused by the requirements of the merger, then it's a huge amount of work in a short time - we'll then move to a period of stability and incremental improvement. If this is where it's at forever, people will be leaving, making a complaint, going off on long term sick. Whatever, it's not bearable.

Even before the merger, because of staff losses, it had got to be very busy. This is about the twentieth institution I've got experience of. I've never had a full time academic job anywhere else, but I've been a fractional member of staff and an HPL member of staff, working in colleges and universities. When I went to Japan, I was working in colleges, universities, high schools as well, private language schools. Here I've always worked in universities. It's about 17 I think I've worked in is the total and I've never known anywhere like this for workload. I've got friends in other places who complain. I've got a friend who's a Deputy Head-teacher at a large secondary school. Well those are notoriously pressured jobs. I've got somebody else working in a college, who's basically at risk, because it's extremely small. That means everybody has a lot to do, because all the roles still need to be done, even if you've only got 300 students. So I can understand that, but as a university... When I first joined you were left alone to get on with it and you were as busy as you wanted to be. That was only until those City and Guild courses went, because they were a little island. Ever since that it's been really busy, because we've been restructured and courses have been re-written over and over again. Always something new, which means that there's never a down time. You never get to do your research. I've never done a minute of research that's been here, because there's never a summer. It's always something like this. It was like this last summer. It will be like this next summer, I'm sure, because post graduate we'll rewrite next year.

I went to one of the first [Vice Chancellor] meetings after [the new Vice Chancellor] got here, people were standing up in this big meeting and saying please stop restructuring this. You can't get any quality out of people who are doing everything for the first time every year. That's not what teaching is about. You do it, it doesn't quite work. You tweak it, you do it better and then every five years you have a significant change. It wasn't as busy as it is now but I don't think we were underworked before. Some people were, some people down there keeping out of sight were. All the senior people are working very hard. All the people who are actually capable of being given tasks to and our staff are working very, very hard. People who you dare not give anything to, because they'll make a mess of it or just not do it and not tell you they've not done it are completely getting away with it. We've got one team - they've all just gone off for six weeks holiday. I know they have. They're not allowed to. They've booked some phantom leave that isn't real, claim to be working at home and I know that they won't be seen for six weeks. But there's nothing you can do. You can't possibly undertake the immense task of gathering evidence and undertaking some kind of competence or disciplinary, it will just kill us. And you can't get rid of people.

***Academic year 2012-2013***

I'm supposed to be Deputy Head of School which means deputising for [Design School Head]. I've been deputising for her for about six years. She can point me at anything. She knows that I'll do it right or if I can't do it right, at least I'll know that I can't do it right, that I won't commit a blunder and I'll hold it until we've had time to talk it through. I was discussing with [her] the other day that it is now very difficult for me to do this because extreme pressure of work and events which are sometimes planned jobs, a lot of times fire fighting, meaning that I can very rarely now sit with [Design Head] as I used to in years gone by. We used to sit in her office regularly, probably twice a week for an extended period, which would be a couple of hours at least and talk through the current issues to help make decisions because I could give her a steer, for example, about how the staff were feeling or whatever it might be. The effect of that would be I would know what she was thinking, planning, hoping for in a nuanced way. So in a meeting when [she] needed supporting, sometimes you've got to manage the situation, judge where people are and make a best guess about how much of what you want to get but a lot of the time I'm no longer sufficiently

confident to speak in that position. Or when she's not here, for example, on holiday and quite often have to park things, because I really have no idea what [her] priorities are in this matter.

There are some things that she's just taken completely away and decided that she wouldn't involve me because there's no point? There's this big kind of partnership thing that's going on, I know nothing about it, Research, the REF, not a thing. I could be of no use. Even at the moment, which is very important, which I always would have been involved in, budgetary planning for next year, staffing planning, curriculum planning, very, very little involvement with what she's preparing for [the Dean]. If [the Dean] calls me, I'm going to have to say, "I'll have to get back to you [name]," text her, wherever she is, in Italy, and have the phone call to catch up and get back.

This is caused by this extreme busyness. It is one side of it and the other side of it, which is student related, which is I'm supposed to have a couple of strategic roles in the school, one of which is Quality. This includes normal quality processes such as module logs, chasing to make sure they were in, checking, responding to external examiners, so on and so forth. I can't do it all. Properly sitting down to read all module logs, carefully annotate them, require revisions, get them back in. It's just hopeless, absolutely impossible. So I don't do my nominated, proper job at all, at all because there is always an email or a phone call or a text message demanding my attention to something right now. So this is really a problem. My teaching has now dwindled almost to nothing. I was supposed to teach 0.2 but I was forced to cancel a great deal of teaching. I'm trying to do things which the staff couldn't do because they don't have the knowledge or the capacity to do the more strategic, managerial things. So towards the end of the year I was basically just dumping my teaching all the time, just trying to keep things on the rails.

The summer is just as busy because we're doing another set of undergraduate provision revisions which has required virtually every module and course specification to have amendments made. That's been enormous. So they saved that for this period. In the past, when I was an Associate Subject Leader, I would say that my week was probably about one third sitting at my desk, doing emails, clearing them; about one third teaching and teaching related; about one third meetings and school tasks like writing documentation. But now, I would say that teaching is

probably, through the year, over the year I probably did about a day a week in term. That of course is only half of the year. School in term, a day with teaching and out of that, the rest of the time, I would say two whole days' meetings and two days of emails and jobs. But the other thing is that we've had to write to staff saying that emailing isn't any longer communicating with us because I can't read them. So I've got over 2,000 unread in my inbox despite every day being at least a ten hour day in the building plus going home to work, there's no way to clear it.

We're supposed to do appraisals for people in July. An appraisal properly done is five to six hours done and, therefore, no appraiser should have more than five or six appraisees. So [Design Head] and I have about 30 or 40 each. So, if that really was five or six hours each, that's two weeks, nothing else done. But on the other hand, you rush them and you risk a complaint. So it's really impossible. I don't mind the appraisals, actually. I think that's a proper job of work for an academic manager and it can be very constructive and very helpful for the appraisee to give really clear targets. I don't mind it at all. I didn't get mine, last year, for example. I did all the documents, sent them in, cancelled numerous times, then forgotten about it. So just this picture of this extreme busyness, it's, you know, the wheels are falling off really.

The way the job's changed, even in 18 months, it's become significantly busier and the ability to function in the strategic and managerial role has really deteriorated. So really, in a lot of ways, I'm not much more than a PA, I would say, which is not a bad thing. I've got a friend who's a PA who's earning £50,000 a year, you know, for a big corporation. She wouldn't give it up for anything. All her holiday's, whatever you want, is free so they can be … I think it is what it is. And it's not that I'm particularly disappointed, because I know that I do valuable work but what I should be doing needs to be done and it's not all being picked up.

An example is that in early June, we were asked by the Centre for 14/15 prospectus texts so, you know, with the extra staff, "Please provide these, on this templates" and then [Design Head] asked [lecturer name], who is our Recruitment Coordinator, "[Name], can you chase and recover these and send them back to me for checking," because they do need to be checked for people staying up to date, right information.

[The lecturer] thought that writing to everybody individually and saying, “Please do this, here’s your forms, send it back to [Design Head],” meant that they’d do it. Of course, that’s a ridiculous idea; they were never going to do that. So it completely dropped between the cracks. [The lecturer] didn’t have the experience to know that they were going to have to be chased time after time, after time, after time, probably visited personally, to get them to do a job like this because they’re so deluged with other tasks and it was a time of year when they were assessing, dealing with external examiners, putting up the show, external shows, all that stuff. So it’s, in a way, completely understandable but some things are priorities and having a presence on the website’s a priority for your course. So [the lecturer] said, “can you just check that [Design Head] did receive all the prospectus texts because [Marketing Head] mentioned you hadn’t got many.” So I checked with [Design Head]; she hadn’t got any. So I went to [Marketing Head], he said, “This is desperately urgent, if they’re not in right now, those courses won’t be on the website for 14/15 which is just desperate.” So [the lecturer] is on leave, [Design Head] is on leave, I’m on leave from tomorrow, so I don’t quite know how we are going to recover these. They’ve all got to be proofread and checked, [Marketing Head] not going to do it because otherwise he’d do it for the whole faculty...So it’s a job that will take each of these individuals 45 minutes or when they don’t do it, it’ll probably take a day of my time to sort it out. I spent probably almost a week breaking down the last bits of the show in [exhibition space] myself with six people, bringing my car in to ferry stuff backwards and forwards from [one building] to [another]. So it’s just everything floats up [from the people below], and floats down [from the people above].

***Issues specific to Design - Design School is more complex***

[The Dean] hasn’t understood that Fine Art is, effectively, one big course and Architecture is probably pretty much one big undergraduate and a couple of big postgraduate courses. But one of the really major things is about staff, staff have different baskets of capacity. You have people who are fantastic, amazing world-leading disciplinary experts but just hopeless about remembering to attend a meeting or fill in a form, just can’t do it; their brains just don’t work that way...just out and creators and we need those people for the profile and to inspire the students and then other people who are the kind of bread and butter, very, very good at being here all the time, always being available to the students but lack any political savvy

and will just walk straight up to the Dean and say the wrong thing, whatever it might be. So it's this, we have staff with different baskets of capabilities which can be very hard. Obviously we've got some fantastic, hardworking staff like [names four]. But we do have some people who you know, just don't read emails.

People have now understood that the university is a different place, that if you don't have students, you probably don't have a job. So they have had to step up to the open day interview thing this year in a way that they haven't in previous years which has been good and is probably much more effective if they do the interview rather than somebody who's not connected to the post. So we've done that quite well and [the Dean] doesn't believe that it's obvious, but – they really got behind the project of 'the Nash'. They really like the Nash brand; they always hated [old name]. They hated [old university name] because the institutional management was never anything other than absolutely horrible to them. So they really like being the Nash. They have got no problem at all – they might be a little bit anxious in Interiors but no problem at all with being aligned with Architecture which they perceive as a good opportunity and a high quality merger.

So that's been good but when you start piling on the stuff ... so this year, our academic calendar, 30 weeks, has been really, really full of non-standard events so, Cross Crits, Celebration Week, Phone to Feed Back, Interim Assessment, Celebration Week, Show preparation, all this kind of stuff. I did a week count and I think it was 21 of 30 academic weeks were non-standard because they've got a special something in them and this has driven them mental, as you can well understand, particularly the Course Leaders. We've got so many events that we must do and we must do in a particular way – incredible, 21 in 30 weeks have got something in them that people have got to do that is not about prepare, teach, mark.

***Design Students more difficult to teach than Architecture Students***

The real difference between Art and Architecture is how students are so different. So they've got, your typical school-leaving students, with a clutch of A Levels who, having gone through, two years of A Level study in a respectable school, are your fairly traditional, quite capable but crucially reasonably independent and self-reliant students who don't expect to be taught as they were in school by a teacher who is

there all the time. A lot of our students, because of our Widening Participation agenda, come from different backgrounds. Even if they're clever, they're coming from an educational scenario where the schools have been having to teach in a very controlled way because they've had these, probably quite mixed and, in general, quite low achieving cohorts. So they're not used to being challenged to think for themselves, act independently, solve their own problems so they're extremely dependent in a lot of cases so a lot of our staff and, indeed, us are, have a lot of our time taken with student issues that would not arise in Architecture.

***After academic year 2012-2013 – thinking about the future***

We are going to be moving out of [current building] into new premises which because of our equipment, which is essential to our delivery, is an absolutely terrifying job to get that stuff moved, installed, properly functioning, between one year of full running and now the sort of a gap to do it in, it's just tiny. We know there won't be enough money, there never is; we know they're expecting us to lose a lot of space, we can lose some but we can't lose, we've already given up all the unnecessary and historic equipment. We don't think we can lose any processes, you know? If you go to Print and say what do we lose, do we lose screen print? Of course not. Do we do lose digital print? Of course not. Do we lose letterpress? That's our USP. Of course not.

We've got some colleagues who will be very nervous. They worked for [another furniture college] who moved to new premises and all the stuff was moving and at the very last minute, nobody knows whether it was real or not, they suddenly realised that the new building didn't have the space they needed to accommodate all their ongoing provision and just closed the Furniture and made staff redundant. They'd been telling them for the whole planning period, years, that you're moving to the new building and space is allocated and there'd been space planning, and then three months, before the move, they were told they couldn't be accommodated in the new building and were all made redundant. In order to avoid a strike just at the point of the College moving from one location to another, they arranged a TUPE transfer of the staff to our institution with protected terms and conditions. So this is incredibly thorny because if the machine shops go to [alternative location] our students won't go to [our building]. They will spend all their time where the equipment is. We can

end up with something looking a bit semi-detached which we don't want because we want to have a School, a physical identity.

***Future for Furniture – protected for Architecture***

I'm absolutely convinced the Dean wants to protect Furniture because its potential is so valuable for Architecture. All architects eventually design some furniture. Sometimes it's fantastic, like Mies van der Rohe, sometimes it's abysmal, you know, and uncomfortable and basically it's just a statement piece but you know, there are books called 'Furniture by Architects' as there is 'Furniture by Artists' which exists. The equipment, this is the problem with furniture makers is. If you want to be a musical instrument maker, you need a huge range of costly equipment but it's all small, whereas if you want to be a furniture maker, it can be a huge range of costly equipment and it's massive. It's desperately hard to set up. The economy is just up there so you reach a high scale because you need a massive footprint of really noisy neighbours, dangerous producing, exhausting fumes and dust and high fire risk. It's just a nightmare and you can spray some really volatile chemicals. The wood mill is enormous, it's a factory and the metal mill's enormous and the polymer mill is enormous and there's veneering somewhere else and spray polishing. We have last man standing status in [our location for] Furniture, pretty much in Jewellery because it's been too expensive for everybody else to continue. For Textile, Graphics, Interiors there are other places.

***Deputy Role – protects his own area***

John talked about the volume of work and said he got promoted to Deputy Head of School which gave him a small pay increase. He said it's just not worth it but he does it because it helps to protect the smaller and costlier disciplines like furniture making. If someone else was deputy then they might well make the decision to close these areas down.

***Project Assistant Role – solution to getting strategic work done***

We had a first meeting with the [new] Project Assistant yesterday. What we're saying is, "you must not let us give you these jobs," because her job – and there's one other as well a Project Assistant – but that's part time and very temporary, for three months, just for the summer. But they are on the Project, which is a project, a school

project. It's not, they're not dog's bodies. We can't afford that. So our project team is people who are going to do brilliant things like they are going to be data mining for us, finding out what are other people offering – we haven't got the time to do this – what are the numbers on those courses? What's the feedback that we can find out on NSS and all the institutions bring us all this data to students whatever and crucially, where is it? So that's one bit of Projects and another is to try and manage the physical move, and another is income generation from short course opportunities. The last bit of the project is about our promotion to aid recruitment because we have this website but it's seriously under-exploited. So these project staff need to do that, not to mop up our jobs.

***Beginning to develop a Design School Identity***

Activism can do a lot of things, can be quite menacing and threatening as well as being quite affirming and do good-ing but, the point about it is we want Design as impactful in some way, not like Art when Art is concerned with myself and my immediate circle and that's kind of fine because it's art but Design should not be like that. We think it should be engaged with some kind of community of users and, therefore, having an effect somehow. We don't want to be prescriptive of what the effect is but call it Design Activisim. So this is the school identity that we're trying to build. We're not anywhere near achieving that in the way that we've been achieving the Nash identity thing but we want to and part of our enthusiasm for getting into this new building, in our own building; we think we'll build school identity, the School of Design at the Nash and it does a particular thing, you know, it celebrates technology, both ancient and advanced and everything we do is to a particular purpose.